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Trial of Geert Wilders signifies Europe's cultural crisis

Dena Nicolai

CAIRO, Egypt – In January 2009, judges in The Netherlands ordered that Geert Wilders, the controversial Dutch MP, should be put on trial under accusations of inciting hatred against Muslims. The trial began at the beginning of October 2010 but on October 22, a re-trial was ordered. According to the Associated Press, Wilders had argued that the original panel of judges at the Amsterdam District Court was biased. He called for their dismissal after they refused to recall a defense witness who publicly stated that a member of an appeals panel directly involved in the case had improperly contacted him. A substitute independent appeals panel agreed with Wilders, and his trial will begin again on a new date with a new set of judges.

Protestors demand "Freedom to express one's opinion."

Specifically, Wilders is on trial under five charges of inciting hatred and discrimination for public anti-Islamic statements made in the media between 2006 and 2008. He has argued that the Qur'an is a fascist book, comparable to *Mein Kampf*, and that it should be banned in The Netherlands; he has also called for an end to Muslim immigration there, among other controversial statements.

Lines in the sand

Wilders' trial has set off a firestorm of debate regarding freedom of speech versus incitement of hatred, and though the retrial will be welcomed by Wilders and his supporters, many remain bitter that he is on trial at all.

Arguing for the trial, the original panel of judges stated that "[i]n a democratic system, hate speech is considered so serious that it is in the general interest to . . . draw a clear line" and that "the court also considers appropriate criminal prosecution for insulting Muslim worshippers because of comparisons between Islam and Nazism made by Wilders."

On the other side, there are those who agree with what the public prosecutor's office first said in 2008, when it declined to take initial action against Wilders after he released a film critical of Islam. At that time, the office released a statement reading, "That comments are hurtful and offensive for a large number of Muslims does not mean that they are punishable". . . . "Freedom of expression fulfills an essential role in public debate in a democratic society."

At last glance, Dutch public opinion on the trial was split almost evenly. However, June elections saw Wilders' Freedom Party votes double, meaning that it is now the third largest party in the country.

What is uncertain at this point is whether or not the votes for Wilders' party were supportive votes for him, or simply a voicing of dissatisfaction against the Socialists and Christian Democrats. It is clear, however, that significant shifts are taking place: a growing discontent in Europe that seems to align itself with a fear of Islam generally and Muslim immigration specifically, combined with an overall fear that Europe is in cultural crisis.

> *I think [the European] reaction to Islam is a bigger threat than Islam itself.*
> – Cornelis Douma, 28

A cross-generational shift?

A group of Belgian graduate students studying in Cairo simply shake their heads when Wilders' name comes up. "We try not to pay too much attention to him; he doesn't represent us," they say. Although, like them, Wilders is an atheist and the majority of his other views line up with European secular liberalism, these young Belgians find his views on Islam unpalatable. One of the students, Thomas, points out that he generally takes a "Dialogue of

See **Wilders** *on page 2*

> *I think Europeans are starting to view new [non Western] immigrants the same way Americans might look at some Mexicans – as people who do not share our values and bring in crime. Unfortunately, the convenient thing for these Europeans is that they can blame it on Islam instead of on poverty and lack of education and integration.*
> – Dutch undergraduate students in Cairo

Afghanistan remains our generation's war

Nick Schuurman

KITCHENER, Ontario – As we halt our routines this week and intentionally mourn the reality of armed conflict, a heavier cloud than usual seems to weigh over plans for Remembrance Day. Canadians grimaced with the association to our military when the presiding judge stated that now-discharged Colonel Russell Williams, having pled guilty to all 88 charges set against him, "will forever be remembered as a sadosexual serial killer." The continued military presence in Afghanistan, which is surrounded by international debate, reminds

See **Afghanistan** *on page 2*

News

Wilders *continued*

Civilizations" approach to Muslim-Western relations. In this regard, he feels that finding common ground and building upon it is a more help-ful approach than Wilders' polarizing views.

But these young Europeans also seem to be experiencing an identity crisis of sorts. While an older generation may agree with Wilders that they are "losing their culture" to "Islamization," the younger generation isn't quite sure what "losing our culture" really means. In the midst of a strong liberal secularism that scoffs at institutions, the religion that might have defined their grandparents (if not their parents) is seen by them to have no place in culture. Ironically, this last fact lines up in many ways with Wilders' views, although the younger generation would not use the "Judeo-Christian values" vocabulary that Wilders has employed.

Wilders is on trial for inciting hatred against Muslims.

However, for young third-generation Dutch Muslims, the children and grandchildren of Moroccan and Turkish immigrants, this identity crisis has meant a shift in the opposite direction – towards religion. Dutch Muslims studying in Cairo point out that while many of their parents and grandparents are in fact secular, their own generation has been left floating; poorly integrated into Dutch society, and pigeonholed by their ethnicity and social status, they are increasingly turning to Islam to fill the void.

Despite this, the younger generation – "the future of Europe" – is less inclined to agree with Wilders that Islam is the biggest threat to Europe. Echoing some of the Belgians, 28-year-old Dutch farmer Cornelis Douma notes, "My biggest fear [for the future of The Netherlands, and Europe as a whole] would be nationalism. In all of the countries in Europe there is a shift to the right. And it seems that that shift brings less cooperation with other countries, a sceptical view to Europe, and a bit of a negative atmosphere." Though, like Douma, this generation still believes that life in Europe "is a gift" and new immigrants "should work and live by the rules of [European] society," they are not quite ready, as Wilders is, to shut the doors.

Cultural crisis

In the end, it seems that the answer to the fear of "Europe's declining culture" lies neither in the overzealous prosecution of people like Wilders, nor in the "blame the immigrants, blame Islam" rhetoric. Though Douma is, like his peers, doubtful of whether or not The Netherlands really has a distinct culture anymore, he feels that "a fast lifestyle, computers, money and the focus on the 'individual' is a bigger threat to Dutch culture than anything else."

It is a shame then, that some of Wilders' other political points, including his call for accessible and humane healthcare, his emphasis on the educational value of the family, his desire for more respect for people in public service (teachers, healthcare workers, policemen, military personnel), and his desire for moderate Muslims to speak up, gets lost in his more black and white, "blame Islam," view of the world. If the political discourse is reduced thus, it is a poor promise for European politics, Europe's identity crisis, and the future of Muslim-Western relations as a whole.

Dena Nicolai (dena.nicolai@gmail.com) lives and works in Cairo, Egypt. She is originally from Edmonton.

WikiLeaks defends its release of classified documents on Iraq War

Brad Knickerbocker

WASHINGTON (CSM) – WikiLeaks, the controversial classified information clearinghouse, is defending its release of what it calls "The Iraq War Logs" against charges that it is undermining the security of American and coalition forces. In addition, the organization intends to release thousands more classified documents dealing with the war in Afghanistan.

The reports detail 109,032 deaths in Iraq. Some 60 percent of the total is civilian deaths.

"For comparison, the 'Afghan War Diaries,' previously released by WikiLeaks, covering the same period, detail the deaths of some 20,000 people," states WikiLeaks on its web site. "Iraq during the same period was five times as lethal with equivalent population size."

Pentagon officials and US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton have condemned the release of such information.

"Our fear here is that the release of this classified information will give our enemies the opportunity to mine that database, to look for how we respond to certain situations," Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell told CNN. "If they can see patterns of behaviour, our tactics, our techniques and our procedures, the capabilities of our equipment, response times, how we cultivate sources, this is all information which should never be in the public domain. [It] could threaten the lives of American forces not just in Iraq or Afghanistan but around the world."

Time for secrets is passed

In July, WikiLeaks released 70,000 documents related to the Afghanistan war. A junior US Army intelligence analyst, Private First Class Bradley Manning, was arrested in May and charged with the unauthorized use and disclosure of classified information. He is being held in the US Marine Corps brig at Quantico, Virginia.

Since then, Defense Secretary Robert Gates has told the Senate Armed Services Committee that the Afghanistan leak did not reveal any sensitive intelligence sources or methods.

That's essentially the point made by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange regarding the latest report on Iraq. "While there may have been legitimate reasons to keep many of these reports secret at the time they were made, that time has passed," he said in an interview with Sky News. "The attempt to keep them secret is an attempt to keep the public record sanitized and keep the American administration from being criticized."

LENNART PREISS/AP

Julian Assange, founder of the WikiLeaks website, defends his release of classified information.

As reported by the British newspaper *The Guardian* (one of several news outlets that received an advanced look at the WikiLeaks information), the new logs detail how:

- US authorities failed to investigate hundreds of reports of abuse, torture, rape and even murder by Iraqi police and soldiers whose conduct appears to be systematic and normally unpunished.
- A US helicopter gunship involved in a notorious Baghdad incident had previously killed Iraqi insurgents after they tried to surrender.
- More than 15,000 civilians died in previously unknown incidents. US and UK officials have insisted that no official record of civilian casualties exists, but the logs record 66,081 non-combatant deaths out of a total of 109,000 fatalities.

Afghanistan *continued*

Canadians afresh of the painful realities of war. 152 Canadian military personnel have sacrificed their lives in peacekeeping efforts since 2002. Nearly a century after the first Remembrance Day was held throughout the Commonwealth in 1919, the reality of international armed conflict is just as stark for Canadians as it was after World War I.

Pivotal conflict

Canadian troops are scheduled to withdraw from Afghanistan by December 2011. A year before the hotly-debated proposed pullout, the statistics are both devastating and disheartening: the number of US and coalition deaths since the start of the so-called Operation Enduring Freedom has progressively increased since conflict involving the foreign military presence began. Already, this has been the deadliest year so far for foreign troops, with nearly 600 deaths among coalition soldiers since January. Despite optimism regarding the progress that has been made, and hopes for future efforts aided by foreign troops, discouraging trends remain. The number of IED attacks and resulting wounded coalition fighters have both escalated to their highest point since the beginning of the operation. And though statistics regarding deaths of Afghan civilians due to the ongoing conflict vary from 1200 to well over 3000 at the mid-point of this year, all sources agree to a dramatic rise in civilian casualties as well. No consensus exists on the future of NATO-led military presence in the country, with supporters pointing to small successes, while critics are standing behind the numbers and suggesting that the surge has not accomplished what it set out to do. Whether any Canadian citizen either supports or criticizes the mission in Afghanistan, it is clear that serving Canadian soldiers uphold the values of their predecessors and that any stain resulting from Russell Williams belongs to him alone.

Nick Schuurman works as a pastor to a Hmong community in Kitchener, Ontario.

Column

Throwing Stones at the Crystal Cathedral

As long as there have been televangelists and mega-church ministers, there have been scandals. Way back in the 1920s, there was Aimee Semple McPherson – who faked her own death and later claimed to have been kidnapped, drugged, tortured and held for ransom – all for reasons that are mysterious to this day.

There was Jim Bakker's fall from grace in 1986, followed closely by Jimmy Swaggart's public, tearful confession after being caught with a prostitute in 1988.

Then there was Peter Popoff – a so-called prophet and a faith healer – who used an earpiece to receive information about audience members. He went bankrupt in 1987.

And let's not forget Benny Hinn. In 2004, the CBC program "The Fifth Estate" showed behind-the-scenes footage of the faith healer's staff callously turning away the seriously disabled who had come for healing. In 2007, Hinn and five other US pastors came under investigation by the Senate for alleged financial wrongdoings. And on it goes.

The list of evangelical leaders caught in various scandals is a lengthy and depressing one. And when you combine the evangelical community's scandals together with the Roman Catholic church's, it's no wonder that a 2010 ranking of various professions by "trust" puts the clergy at number 11 – just ahead of advertisers and lawyers.

And yet, for me, no matter how bad things got in the 1980s, there was still one big-name American pastor – besides Billy Graham – whom I could look up to: Robert Schuller. My dad and I loved watching Schuller's "Hour of Power."

First of all, because he was one of us. He was from the Reformed Church of America, so he was in our theological wheelhouse, so to speak. Second, he was amazingly upbeat. As a teen, I found his positive message to be a welcome antidote to the dreary pessimism I heard from our pulpit.

And even though Schuller had the audacity to build a megachurch and call it the "Crystal Cathedral," he escaped the 80s and 90s unscathed by the scandals that plagued other pastors of his generation. He retired, gracefully, just a few years ago.

Then, on October 18, 2010, the Crystal Cathedral went into bankruptcy protection. And the news stories started. With donations dropping by 30 percent, viewership shrinking and bills mounting, the Crystal Cathedral found itself a staggering $43 million in the hole.

In media stories – and in Wikipedia and elsewhere on the web – the story played out as another evangelical megachurch scandal.

Yet, there's no sex involved.

No one has been defrauded.

And while the Crystal Cathedral's budget may be larger than that of a small municipal government, other churches in North America have also seen their budgets tighten in the last two years. So why the sudden avalanche of media-fuelled schadefreude?

Slaves to success

I think there are two reasons. The first is the distrust of clergy mentioned earlier. Robert Schuller may be the real deal – an honest to goodness man of God – but because he was on TV with the rest of the scandal-ridden class of the 1980s, he's unfairly lumped in with them.

But the second reason for the media frenzy is a little more complicated. In his early ministry, Schuller would say things like: "Never underestimate your problem or your ability to deal with it."

Or: "You can often measure a person by the size of his dream." And while those statements may be pop psychology rather than theology, they're not necessarily offensive.

But when Schuller spoke about money, things got a little murkier. Over the years he's said such things as: "Our greatest lack is not money for any undertaking, but rather ideas. If the ideas are good, cash will somehow flow to where it is needed." And he's also said: "High achievers spot rich opportunities swiftly, make big decisions quickly and move into action immediately. Follow these principles and you can make your dreams come true."

This kind of language takes Schuller perilously close to "prosperity gospel" territory – a new movement inside American Evangelicalism that preaches that God wants Christians to be rich. – All they have to do is "name it and claim it."

The flip side – never expressed as such, but understood to be true nonetheless – is that if you're poor, you haven't done enough to please God. If you aren't rich it's because you haven't pulled yourself up by your bootstraps enough, believed enough, or contributed enough to your church to be blessed by God.

Of course, in good times – in the time before the world economy melted down – it was much easier to find signs of God's exclusive financial favour to Christians.

So although Schuller's ministry successfully escaped the sex-and-money evangelical scandals of the 80s, it eventually became a slave to success itself. It became a symbol of a kind of evangelicalism that despises all poverty as weakness, sees any financial hardship as a result of sin, and equates every material success with spiritual favour. When the global economy got rocked by recession, people began to question that belief and, with it, success-oriented megachurches like the Crystal Cathedral.

That's why this simple story of a church going bankrupt is being treated as a scandal.

Actually, that's why it IS a scandal.

Not because churches shouldn't be allowed to fail. But because we should never let ourselves fall into the trap of equating material success or failure with our own efforts – not at the church level, or individually. When we use our wealth to prove to others how much God loves us, we become a miniature Crystal Cathedral.

That's dangerous. In the words of another conservative evangelical pastor, Rick Warren: "This idea that God wants everybody to be wealthy? There is a word for that: baloney. It's creating a false idol. You don't measure your self-worth by your net worth. I can show you millions of faithful followers of Christ who live in poverty. Why isn't everyone in the church a millionaire?"

The answer is obvious – or it should be. And as the economic storm that has battered and buffeted world economies subsides, perhaps it's time to ask ourselves if the time for Crystal Cathedrals – both the one in Orange County California and the smaller copies that live on in our hearts – is at a much-deserved end.

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com) is a member of Rehoboth CRC in Bowmanville, Ontario.

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Editorials

Even better than the real thing

Angela Reitsma Bick

The other night we watched the news with our TV-illiterate daughters, which meant thirty minutes of answering the question, "Is this real?" The teacher who kissed a pig, surprisingly, was. The weather was. But how to explain the man in a microwave, the woman with back pain or the talking chicken?

Distinguishing reality from artifice is harder these days. In his book *Reality Hunger,* David Shields argues that our culture is obsessed with "reality" precisely because we experience hardly any (35). We applaud each new device that replicates the real world based on how authentic it appears. Memoir is the hottest new book genre where marketability trumps truth. Reality TV – that combination of game show and soap opera – continues to fascinate us, making it easy to forget that product placement drives each episode. Every Facebook page is an ongoing epic with one self-centered character – hero and author both. What happens when we forget that memoirs are made up, reality TV is scripted and our online selves are carefully edited? What happens when we stop being able to answer the question, "Is this real?"

'Survivor' to the death

The Hunger Games Trilogy by Suzanne Collins was completed this past August with the publication of *Mockingjay.* The hugely popular series, 92 weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list, imagines a post-apocalyptic world controlled by an all-powerful government in the Capitol. Each district under the Capitol's control must annually send one boy and one girl to fight each other to the death in a televised event called the Hunger Games. Collins says she was inspired by the Greek myth of Theseus and by channel surfing during the Iraq war, which interspersed the news with a reality TV show. Her books are provoking and addictive. They also induced nightmares in six out of seven of my friends.

The main character, Katniss, ends up fighting a great deal, as you might imagine. She is conscious of being filmed at every moment. Her combat skills must be matched by looking physically perfect and by playing up a romance. The winning combination is half survival and half performance. Many people die horribly in this story, but it's not always obvious why or what's going on. And part of what gave me nightmares was how close to home this feels.

Consider this: I can learn more about a cousin from reading his Facebook page than I can from a conversation with him. And this: In 2008, 70 million people voted to elect Barack Obama, the same year that 97 million viewers cast votes on *American Idol*. Or this: in Second Life, a virtual world where real people run virtual lives, the Middle East conflict is playing out just as it does on *terra firma*. Hackers have left swastikas and other virtual graffiti on the virtual Western Wall in Second Life's Israel. To counter this, the Jewish community has established an online Jewish militia, which patrols the virtual wall. We've become as self-conscious as Katniss, and just as convinced that performance is somehow key to life.

Get real

Some people say, "Who cares?" No need to be embarrassed about wanting the frame of reality around a contrived story. At least no lives are lost when a virtual suicide bombing takes place in the online West Bank.

I say, "This confusion matters." It is changing how we feel and think and act. I have lost something when a conversation becomes harder to have than updating or reading an online profile. Americans have lost something when more people care more about the outcome of *Idol* than their presidential elections. When we stop being able to discern the difference between real events and fabricated ones, then *Survivor* truly is interchangeable with the Iraq war. We are equally moved by each one, and can just as equally tune out and walk away. Gregory Levy illustrates this in his brilliant book, *How to Make Peace in the Middle East in Six Months or Less (Without Leaving Your Apartment).* He goes online to interview an avatar in virtual Israel, who says, "These Palestinian people show up in Second Life Israel and harass me for . . . occupying Palestine. But it doesn't make any sense. I've never even been to the real Israel. In RL [real life], I live in Pittsburgh. I'm not occupying anything" (104). We have all lost something when our acting starts to matter more than the actual.

The big performers of Jesus' day were the Pharisees, of course. They were centre-stage believers, always conscious of being in the public eye. This self-consciousness, their careful personas, let them down in the end. It was one more thing that kept them from noticing the Son of God in their midst.

What happens when no one can answer, "Is this real?"

What happens when no one asks?

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of CC. *She lives in Barrie, Ontario.*

Christian Courier

Founded in 1945

An independent biweekly that seeks to engage creatively in critical Christian journalism, connecting Christians with a network of culturally savvy partners in faith for the purpose of inspiring all to participate in God's renewing work within his fallen creation.

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The publication of comments, opinions or advertising does not imply agreement or endorsement by *Christian Courier* or the publisher. Please contact circulation if you cannot afford the subscription price but want to receive *Christian Courier.*

The paper is published the second & fourth Mondays of the month.

Christian Courier
5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: (905) 682-8311; 1-800-969-4838
Web site: www.christiancourier.ca
Publications Mail Registration No. 09375
We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities. Canada

A time for all things: fighting the death of liturgy

Brett Alan Dewing

I wasn't raised in the Christian Reformed Church, but when I entered it in my early twenties, one thing grabbed my attention more than any other. At First Christian Reformed Church of Hamilton, I looked down at my bulletin and saw that the service had been broken down into sections – to my theatre-major brain, acts. The acts of the service ordered everything gracefully and seamlessly walked me through the stages of worship.

This was liturgy, and I had never seen it so well employed. Rarely did I leave the church building without having to wipe tears out off my eyes and a smile off my lips. The area in which I currently live has no Christian Reformed churches, and so I have had ample experience with congregations that misuse or ignore liturgy. In one, the order of service is so strictly scripted and not thoughtfully structured. In another – the type of church I'm currently attending – there seems to be no liturgy outside of worship song, worship song, sermon, worship song.

Yes, it seems that liturgy is dying, but I refuse to let it go gentle into that good night.

Good News for the Postmodern Man

My current congregation falls under the category I like to call "Good News for the Postmodern Man." You may remember, about 50 years ago, the advent of the "accessible" Bible billed as Good News for the Modern Man. In similar spirit, these GNftPM churches aim for accessibility by employing "organic" worship and a simple, "unthreatening" structure. If the song, song, sermon, song structure is altered, it is for an offering or a led group prayer. Bring up the word liturgy around my pew-mates, and walls go up instantly as you're regaled with stories of the "dead, legalistic churches" they seem to have barely escaped from alive.

But, I believe that Christianity always offers a third way, between the prescribed roads of the world's wisdom that tend to come in extremes. For me (and partly, this is because I *am* a playwright and love structure), liturgy is absolutely essential for my truest worship. I want to explain to people who cling to the idea of "organic worship" that the very word they love to use betrays their agenda. Look at anything organic – it is tightly structured and ordered for optimal performance. So should our Sunday service be.

What liturgy is

I've thought a lot about what I mean when I yearn for liturgy. I know it is a structure that clearly defines our identity and standing with God. I know that it is not passive, like some churches that order their service through "the welcome," "the renewal" and such. It is something that spells out where we are, what we're doing and what are role is. It walks us through the steps necessary to truly come – and come clean – before God.

When an artist sets out to paint, write, choreograph or compose, she does so with a vision, a plan and a structure. When a builder builds, a politician campaigns or a parent instructs, it is after the often harder work of planning. When we approach our Creator, then, shouldn't we do so with every bit as much intentionality?

Liturgy is like grammar: many see it as arbitrary and a killjoy, but it is truly a tool set in place to clarify, guide and elevate the medium in which it governs.

A basic model

After some reflection, I have drawn up what I see as a basic liturgical structure.

We Come Into His Presence
We Search Our Hearts
We Confess Our Sins
We Are Forgiven
We Praise Him
We Offer Up To Him
We Bring Our Prayers Before Him
We Read His Word
We Listen to His Teaching
We Reflect On What We Have Heard
We Worship Him
We Are Sent To Serve

What many need to realize is that these movements, or acts, of the service are an invitation to unleash all of the arts in your congregation. Under no circumstances should each part be fulfilled through song. Instead, there are myriad ways to draw worshipers into God's presence: poetry, dance, scripture, prayer, art and all types of music are at our disposal, and we should be mobilizing them in the service of worship. Perhaps in this way, we may woo and win those who claim to have been burned by "empty liturgy." Either way, we must never throw out the grand tradition and tool of liturgy.

Brett Alan Dewing is Features Editor of CC.

Letters

Directing the young their way

Bert Witvoet

A few days ago, our youngest son called to ask for the mailing address of *Christian Courier*. He was at his workplace and could not check for the address in the latest issue, which was at home. He wanted to renew his subscription. He had been carrying the renewal card in his bag for weeks and never got around to sending in a cheque. I told him that he could renew online. He seemed surprised.

I was surprised, too, to find out that my computer- and Internet-savvy son had not thought of that. So I took him through the paces: "Click on www.christiancourier.ca and look for 'On-Line Payments' in the left column of the Home Page. Click on it and you will get a choice between a one-year subscription, a two-year subscription, and an electronic subscription. Click on 'two-year subscription' so you won't have to go through this ordeal next year, and then fill out the required form, which asks for your email address, name and city as well as your credit card information. Then click on 'submit this order.'" He thanked me for the advice.

We need to make others aware of our sophisticated online payment opportunities. Now the nice thing about this system is that, even if a young reader is sponging off his Mom's subscription but wants desperately to subscribe, he can do so online and choose between a paper copy and an electronic one, which is $18 cheaper. It only takes a flick of your iPod.

By the way, those who want to make sure that *Christian Courier* will be there for the next generation can donate online as well. Just click on www.christiancourier.ca and look for "On-Line Payment"… well, you get the drift.

As I signed off, I asked my son how he liked reading *CC*. "I really do," he said. "I particularly liked Angela's last editorial."

"What about mine the week before?"

"It was okay."

A time to dare

There is a sense of déjà vu as I read of the recent appointment of Angela Reitsma Bick as editor of *Christian Courier*. I was a young buck of 26 when, in 1976, I purchased Guardian Publishing Company and its publication, Calvinist Contact, from a group of Holland Marsh shareholders. I moved the operation from downtown Hamilton to an empty furniture store in St. Catharines. A few of the Hamilton staff made the move with me and they were supplemented by a team of local men and women.

The late 1970s and early 1980s were glorious years in publishing. We reached a paid weekly circulation of 10,500 and we opened an Alberta office within The King's College in Edmonton where the Western editor and an advertising representative worked part-time. The subscription price jumped from $10 to $12.

During those first few months as editor back in 1976 I spent a bit of time at Dick Farenhorst's bedside before he passed away from cancer. He was, in my young eyes, the patriarch of Christian journalism. He was a mentor before the word became popular.

My background in daily journalism shaped the design and focus of *CC* back then: it took on a news focus, designed to connect primarily Christian Reformed folk to each other. This was, of course, well before the theological split that hit the Christian Reformed Church, resulting in the creation of orthodox congregations.

I say all this, not for nostalgia's sake, but as a strong sense of encouragement to Angela and Brett to shape and mold *Christian Courier* into a publication that is relevant to 21st century Christians, young and old . . . just as Dick Farenhorst, Bert Witvoet and I shaped the publication to reflect our passions and interests.

Dare to break the mold. Dare to re-examine what you do, and why. Dare to make leading-edge decisions. You're young and you can get away with it.

Keith Knight
Guelph, Ontario

Keith Knight served as editor and publisher of Calvinist Contact from 1976 until 1982. He continued as publisher until 1984.

Even though I walk

I heard a sermon recently about how God is not in the eye of the storm. He's not in the forces of nature, but he is present after the destruction, living and moving in the hearts of people through the Spirit.

I think of my brother, Harry, and wish to share a photo, a recorded moment in time, when I walked with him in God's creation. Harry felt that God's Spirit restored him beside the still waters of Balls Falls. In the accompanying photo he is reflected in the waters that instilled peace and understanding. My prayer was that he would stay with us, but the storm of cancer destroyed his body. I miss my brother.

Thanks be to God that he gives us the human spirit – the resilience to see. To see through faith his victory over the turbulence in the world we live in. I am so glad that my brother lived his life in relationship to God, who declares his faithfulness. We may be assured that he has the whole world in his hands.

Audrey der Nederlanden
Edmonton, Alberta

(Harry der Nederlanden was editor of Christian Courier from 2000 till 2008.)

Healthy living

I was glad to read Mr. Van Oene's suggestions for healthy living (Letters, Oct. 11) which certainly can be a good model for many of us. I'm wondering, however, how our Christian Inuvialiut (and Inuit) brothers and sisters from Sachs Harbour, Cambridge Bay, and Pond Inlet would respond. I think their faithful views on healthy eating and living might differ quite a bit from those raised in a different cultural tradition.

Curt Gesch
Telkwa, B.C.

Christian Courier

Member of Canadian Church Press and Evangelical Press Association

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Subscriptions:	**Canada (G.S.T. incl.) and USA**	**Overseas**
one yr. (24 issues)	$48.00	$100
two yrs. (48 issues)	$90.00	

Advertising deadlines: display and classified advertising: Wednesday, 9 a.m. (12 days before publication date) See classified pages or web site **www.christiancourier** for more details.
(ISSN 1192-3415) Published second and fourth Mondays of the month.

Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1
Tel: 905-682-8311 or 1-800-969-4838
e-mail: Advertising: ads@christiancourier.ca
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PRINTED IN CANADA

News

God saved us, says evangelical preacher-miner

Jose Henriquez praised God for the successful rescue of the 33 miners.

SAN JOSE, Chile (TCI) – The evangelical preacher who was rescued along with 32 other miners in Chile last week has spoken in more detail about the Bible studies and the singing that took place while buried deep underground.

Jose Henriquez gave all the glory to God in an interview with *The Times*, describing the 69 days trapped in the collapsed mine.

A number of miners have thanked Henriquez for the support he gave while trapped. One said he had brought "calm, God and unity to the most difficult moments."

One of the team above ground said Henriquez was the "unifying element," adding, "The moment of prayer [every day], of his readings of the Bible, was the most special moment for the miners because it was the only moment that they all came together, at twelve in the day and at six in the evening they came together in this moment of unity." It has also emerged that men who had never prayed starting to do so during the crisis.

Speaking to Channel 4 News, Richard Villaroel, the 28th miner to be pulled to safety, said he came close to God down in the mine. He explained: "I have never prayed before. I learnt to pray down there. I came close to God."

Singing to the Lord

Henriquez said, "We were singing to the Lord, we were doing what pleases the Lord. So everyone accepted him, many of them reconciled themselves with the Lord, some of them made promises to him."

During their time underground Henriquez asked for 33 Bibles to be sent down to the miners in a small capsule and he told *The Times* they engaged in Bible studies twice daily.

Speaking about the moment when the miners were discovered by a probe, Henriquez said, "Any man is only a mere instrument in the hands of God. The resources of faith, this is what moves mountains. Only the Lord could guide that drill to us."

Henriquez, who is married with twin daughters and has a grandchild, said it is "joy to be free."

After the miners' return to the surface the Protestant chaplain to the President of Chile also gave thanks to God for the rescue. In a remarkably candid interview with BBC Radio Five Live Reverend Alfredo Cooper described how all the miners testified that Jesus was there with them at all times. And he said that it is clear to "scientists, politicians, presidents" that God answers prayer.

Newfoundland: CRWRC needs more volunteers, funding in Igor aftermath

BURLINGTON, Ont (CRCNA) – Additional volunteers are needed to help in the clean-up and rebuilding of homes that were damaged by Hurricane Igor, which blew over Newfoundland and Labrador in late September, says Bill Adams, director of Disaster Responses Services (DRS) for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

"Dozens of homes have already been cleaned up, sanitized and sometimes repaired, but the number of requests for assistance is growing almost as fast as others are completed," says CRWRC regional manager Tony DeWeerd. "More volunteers and more funding are needed."

CRWRC-DRS volunteers have been assisting with clean-up and repair of more than 100 homes damaged by powerful winds and torrential rain. "While CRC congregations in the region have been sending volunteers and supporting them, CRWRC can with additional donations, provide more volunteers to help address the growing need for clean-up and rebuilding," says Adams.

The vicious tropical storm flooded homes, washed out roads and bridges and stranded thousands of residents in dozens of communities. The Bonavista Peninsula was hardest hit. Damage from heavy rain, debris, fallen trees and erosion was widespread.

Older adults with few resources

CRWRC's response to Igor is focused on the rural, low-income community of Catalina, where many residents are older adults who have few resources to repair damage to their own homes or help each other recover from the devastating storm.

DeWeerd says that volunteers who are assisting with clean up and repair are mainly from congregations in the CRC's Classis Eastern Canada. CRC members from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island were recruited by Dick Van Oord, CRWRC area manager from Fredericton, NB.

Adams adds that CRWRC managers will continue to work with other denominations, including the Presbyterian Church in Canada, to determine whether there will be sufficient financial support to deploy additional volunteer work teams in the coming months to help residents meet longer-term rebuilding needs.

In its hurricane response CRWRC is also collaborating in Newfoundland with Samaritan's Purse, Mennonite Disaster Service and the Salvation Army.

Polish town builds world's largest Jesus statue

WARSAW, Poland (Deutsche Presse Agentur) – A Polish town is building the world's largest statue of Jesus, which would surpass the famous Christ sculpture in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro.

The statue in Swiebodzin, a town of 22,000 people in western Poland, measures 33 metres high and will sit atop a 17-metre-high mount. It was built from private donations and designed by Sylwester Zawadzki, a local priest.

The statue is set to be inaugurated on November 21. Construction may be delayed, however, because a special crane or helicopter may be required to secure the head and arms to the statue, local media reported.

Bishops condemn online sale of Body Worlds corpses

Gunther von Hagens and one of his plasticised bodies.

GUBEN, Germany (CatholicCulture.org) – Roman Catholic bishops in Germany are denouncing a decision by Gunther von Hagens, who created the infamous Body Worlds exhibit, to sell his plastinated corpses online. "This is not about new discoveries for science and research, but about picking at bones and spectacle under the guise of medical enlightenment," said Archbishop Robert Zollitsch of Freiburg, chairman of the German bishops' conference.

Gunther von Hagens, the man behind the controversial anatomical Body Worlds exhibitions, announced recently that he would be opening an online store selling his human and animal plastinations. But church leaders in Germany are outraged.

Provocative 'Dr. Death'

The provocative 65-year-old, known as "Dr. Death" in Germany, sent a letter to his body donors, customers and other business partners announcing that <www.plastination-products.com> would open on November 3, the daily paper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported.

Von Hagens is infamous for inventing a process for transforming the bodies of people and animals into plasticised pieces for his Body Worlds shows – and now such items will be available for purchase online – but only to scientists and medical experts.

An entire plastinated human body will run €69,615 (just under $100,000 Cdn), a torso €56,644, and a head €22,015, the paper reported.

This May, von Hagens, who dresses a bit like a 19th century undertaker, reopened his Brandenburg plastination plant, the "Plastinarium," after extensive renovations in Guben. He now has some 200 workers creating new plastinations of humans and animals.

But Catholic bishops in Germany reacted to the announcement of the new online shop with indignation. In a group statement, Archbishop Robert Zollitsch and others called on politicians to stop von Hagens from committing what they called "breaking a taboo." The bishops and many other critics have accused von Hagens of exploiting human beings. It doesn't matter that the bodies von Hagens uses have been donated by the deceased or their families.

"This is not about new discoveries for science and research, but about picking at bones and spectacle under the guise of medical enlightenment," Zollitsch said in the statement, adding that the sale of body parts is disrespectful to the dead.

Canadian bishops join in opposition

Two bishops in Edmonton have also joined in a public statement of concern about the "Body Worlds" exhibit of human cadavers. Archbishop Richard Smith and Bishop David Motiuk, the leader of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton, reminded the faithful, "The human body retains its dignity even in death."

The bishops questioned the prudence of the exhibition in which human cadavers are exposed, with skin pulled back to reveal muscles, tendons and internal organs. "These are bodies of people," they pointed out, calling for proper appreciation of human dignity.

The bishops' statement did not condemn the "Body Worlds" exhibit, but said that the human body should not be "objectified," nor "gawked at as an object of curiosity."

News

Bhutan: Man imprisoned for showing Christian films

THIMPHU, Bhutan (CDN) – A court in predominantly Buddhist Bhutan has sentenced a Christian to three years in prison for "attempting to promote civil unrest" by screening films on Christ and Christianity.

On October 7 a local court in Gelephu convicted Prem Singh Gurung, a 40-year-old ethnic Nepalese citizen from the Sarpang district in southern Bhutan, according to the government-run daily, *Kuensel*.

Gurung was arrested four months ago after local residents complained that he was showing Christian films in the villages of Gonggaon and Simkharkha. Gurung invited villagers to watch Nepali movies and between each feature he showed films on Christianity.

Government attorneys could not prove "beyond reasonable doubt" that Gurung promoted civil unrest. Therefore "he was charged with *an attempt* to promote civil unrest," the daily reported.

Gurung was also charged with violating the Bhutan Information, Communication and Media Act of 2006. Two sections of that law require that authorities examine all films before public screenings.

A Christian from Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, told the Christian news agency Compass that Gurung's conviction disturbed the villagers. While Gurung has the right to appeal, it was unclear whether he has the resources to do so.

Brought his own generator

Both villages are nearly inaccessible to the outside world. (Bhutan is a landlocked country lying between India and China.) It can take from 24 to 48 hours to reach Gonggaon and Simkharkha from the nearest road. Neither village has electricity but Gurung, with the help of others, brought his own generator and projector to show the films.

Over 75 per cent of the 684,000 people in Bhutan are Buddhists. Hindus make up 22 per cent of the population. Only about 6,000 people – mostly from the south – are Christians. However, their presence in Bhutan is not officially acknowledged. As a result they must practice their faith from the confines of their homes, with no Christian church or institution officially registered.

Buddhism is Bhutan's state religion, and according to the 2008 constitution the government is mandated to protect Buddhist culture and religion. As in other parts of South Asia, people in Bhutan mistakenly believe that Christianity is a Western faith and that missionaries give monetary benefits to convert people from other religions.

Kuensel published an opinion piece by a Bhutanese woman from New York who described herself as "an aspiring Buddhist" but who condemned both the conviction of Gurung and Christian "tactics." She advocated that anyone from Bhutan have "the right to choose one's faith." She asserted, "We have nothing to worry about Buddhism losing ground to Christianity. But we will if, as a predominantly Buddhist state, we start to deny people the right to their faith."

'Christians are a cancer'

Hers is a view of "liberal Buddhists" but is far from the majority view. More typical was the reaction from someone calling himself The Last Dragon: "These Christians are a cancer to our society."

In July the government proposed an amendment to Bhutan's penal code which would punish "proselytizing" that uses "coercion or other forms of inducement."

Buddhist monks in Bhutan's capital, Thimphu.

Persecution of Christians arose in Bhutan in the 1980s when the king began a "one nation, one people" campaign to "protect the country's sovereignty and cultural integrity." Ethnic Nepalese in Bhutan protested the movement on grounds of discrimination. The government responded by sending out the army and rounding up and expelling some 100,000 ethnic Nepalese, many of whom were secret Christians.

An absolute monarchy for over 100 years, Bhutan became a constitutional monarchy in 2008.

Partnership joins 'churches here' to 'churches there'

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – A group of Christian Reformed Church agencies has developed a partnership from which has sprung a new program called iGPS – the Inter-agency Global Partnership Strategy.

The new program provides a range of resources to CRC congregations interested in developing a "sister church" relationship with another congregation. Most of those other congregations are based overseas.

About two years ago Christian Reformed World Missions (CRWM) representatives were increasingly hearing this question: "We'd like to be more involved in mission work. Do you have a sister church program?"

The question set members of the CRWM's team for education and engagement on a journey into uncharted territory. The team asked itself, "How do we advise a congregation 'here' on how to connect with a community or congregation 'there' in a way that's healthy, reciprocal and sustainable?"

That question was answered by developing a partnership with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Back To God Ministries International, Partners Worldwide (a non-denominationally related agency) and ServiceLink. All of these groups came together to address the increasingly obvious reality that churches that had done short-term, overseas mission trips for years were yearning for a higher quality, longer-term relationship.

Deepening connections

It also came to their notice that some churches in the denomination were already developing partnerships on their own, and encountering challenges and mistakes that missions' agencies had dealt with in one way or another over the years.

Setting iGPS apart from the usual course of missionary support or project-funding is its goal of forming relationships. Money doesn't enter the picture until at least a year into the relationship, as it has potential to do harm as well as good. The focus of iGPS is to deepen connections between Christians, educate each other on what life is like in a different country/culture, and become involved in each other's efforts to move both communities closer to the vision that God has for them.

Crystle Numan during her global partnership visit to East Africa.

This requires the commitment of the North American congregation to allow itself to be changed and influenced by its sister church. Global partnerships are a two-way street.

The CRC initiative has developed a variety of resources which can be used by churches considering or already engaging in partnerships. Resources, articles and training modules are available on-line in two different locations. Articles to help churches determine their readiness and the next steps are available on the Global Mission site at <network.crcna.org/globalmission>.

Other resources and training modules are available at <www.crcna.org/igps>. The training modules help leadership teams in areas such as cross-cultural communication, learning about poverty, handling issues surrounding money, identifying paternalism and sustainability and more. These modules can also serve as stand-alone pieces for adult education classes.

"These resources (material, spiritual, emotional, relational, financial and others) should be used for the greater good of God's kingdom. We see close relationships between distant churches as a way to share the resources and knowledge that we have with each other for the building up of the body of Christ," says promotional material for iGPS. The iGPS motto is of "All one body We."

Pennsylvania: Pro-life advocates win free-speech case

PITTSBURGH, Pa (LifeNews.com) – Pro-life advocates in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, won a legal battle recently as a judge agreed to put an injunction in place against a law which restricts the right of pro-life people and others to distribute literature within the city. The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), a pro-life law firm, filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of two pro-life advocates challenging the constitutionality of the Pittsburgh ordinance.

U.S. District Court Judge David Cercone granted a temporary injunction to stop the enforcement of the law that bans putting fliers on parked cars in the city. The law bans any written literature "so as to cause litter or unreasonably interfere with pedestrians or traffic" without permission of the owner of the car.

Two pro-life advocates, Kathleen Ramsey and Albert Brunn, challenged the constitutionality of the law so they could place voter guides on vehicles prior to the Nov. 2 elections in the U.S. According to the Pittsburgh *Post-Gazetter*, Edward White of the ACLJ argued that the law is vague and stifled free speech. He said litter isn't caused by people passing out pro-life information but by the drivers who toss the information to the streets instead of throwing it away.

Assistant city solicitor Michael Kennedy told the court the law was written to stop excessive litter problems caused by the distribution of literature, sales brochures and other items placed on vehicles, and that it wasn't intended to target political free speech.

Impinges on 'free speech'

The suspension of the laws means the two pro-life advocates and others will be able to get information to Pittsburghers without fear of prosecution.The ACLJ contended that "the city's ordinance is overbroad, vague and impinges on the rights of free speech and due process that the United States Constitution guarantees."

The legal papers ACLJ filed added, "The Supreme Court stated many years ago, "It has long been recognized that the First Amendment [allowing freedom of speech] needs breathing space and that statutes attempting to restrict or burden the exercise of First Amendment rights must be narrowly drawn and represent a considered legislative judgment that a particular mode of expression has to give way to other compelling needs of society."

The ruling in this case follows another this past summer in which the city lost a case regarding the buffer zone law that has been the subject of lawsuits by pro-life advocates. The debate revolved around a 2005 "bubble zone" law that restricted access to public areas surrounding abortion businesses.

News

Cyclists caught red-handed: Canadians raise money to save child soldiers

Emily Wierenga

Every year, children as young as seven are enlisted by more than 50 countries into the armed forces. Seventy-seven percent of the recruits witness others being killed; 39 percent kill; 39 percent abduct other children, and one third of female abductees are raped.

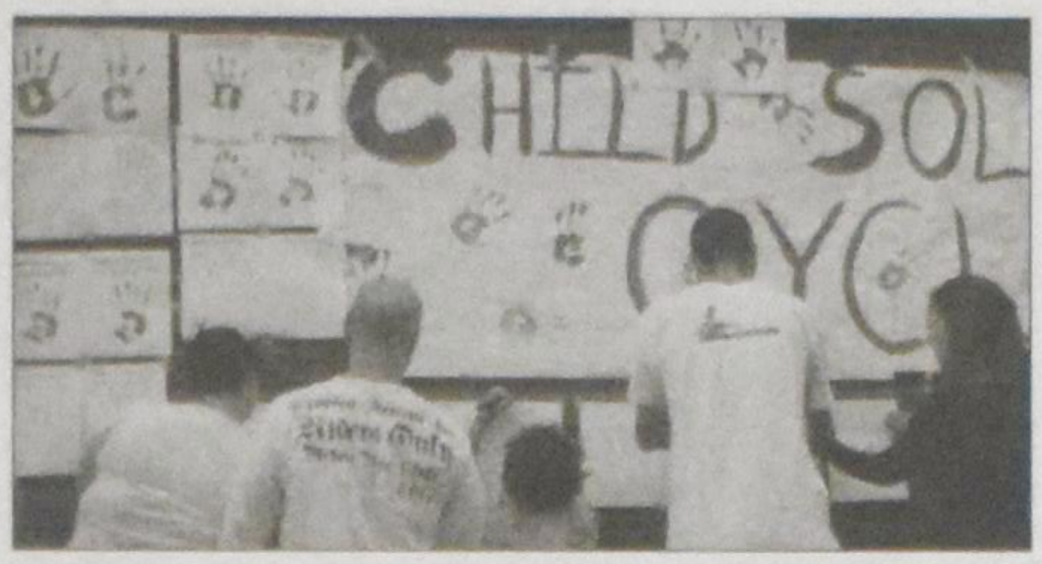
"So many times I just cried inside my heart because I didn't dare cry out loud," said a 14-year-old girl, abducted in January 2000 by the Revolutionary United Front, an armed group in Sierra Leone.

While most are taken captive, some, like 15-year-old Jean-Paul, enlist in order to take care of their families. "I joined the army to get food for my mother, my brothers and sisters," said Jean, one of 4,500 Rwandan children between the ages of 10-18 who served in the military during the country's civil war.

Servants more than they are soldiers, the children have multiple masters who make them carry guns and ammunition, gather firewood, and perform general errands.

This summer, five Canadian teens left their homes and families to ride over 1,800 kilometres on behalf of these child soldiers.

"Your life is determined by the chances you take and the challenges you choose to face," says Ben Gunn-Doerge of Ottawa, who, along with high-school friends Sandy MacDonald, Phillip Schleihauf, Jamie MacDonald and Matthieu Halle, cycled from Ottawa to St. John's, August 1-29. "Without ordinary people taking risks there would be no progress and change. The greatest thing about the possibility of change is that it is in our own hands!"



'We're all people'

A brainchild of 19-year-old Phillip, Child Soldier Cycle inadvertently began in 2009 when Phil, who took a year off from school, unicycled from Victoria, BC, to Ottawa. When Jamie teased him about not "finishing" what he had called his Unicycle across Canada, Phil decided to take the challenge and use it for good.

"Originally I thought of going overseas, but that didn't end up happening, so I was trying to think of some way I could make a positive change within Canada," says the Queen's University electrical engineering student. "One issue that had really struck me while I was in high school was child soldiering."

Phil decided to finish his route if Jamie joined him. And in the end, there were five.

"We started the tour by riding out of St. Joe's (Ottawa), and wrapped up at St. Theresa's church in St John's," says Phil, a member of St. Joseph's Catholic Parish where they received a blessing prior to their trip.

Funded by the boys, the goal of the trip was not to draw attention to themselves – a hard feat, with one unicyclist and four two-wheelers followed by parents in support vehicles – but to collect two handprints from each individual met; one for local media, and the other for national.

"We did it to get exposure for the two hundred and fifty thousand children who are being denied a happy childhood," explains Phil, who's unicycled for the past eight years. "For the children who are being killed every day; who are turning into killers, and who are being trapped in violence that they cannot escape by themselves."

Despite being a global travesty, the boys were shocked by how little coverage child soldiers receive. Their trip aimed to change that.

"We're all human," says Jaime, 18. "We're all people. We all deserve the same childhood and childhood opportunities, but that's not what happens. And it's not right. These kids are being exploited and hardly anyone talks about it because it's not covered fairly in mainstream media."

Far away, not forgotten

Child Soldier Cycle recognizes the sanctity of life, a fact which propelled the Catholic boys in their month-long journey. "While it may have been on an individual basis, I think we all derived strength and inspiration from our faith on the road," says Phil.

After all, they were obeying the Biblical command to care for the least of these – and when the least are being forced to brand weapons and witness atrocities, it's a crime not to care.

"I think the nation should support these young people because the cause is a valid one," Mayor Brad Woodside of Fredericton, NB, told *The Daily Gleaner*. "There are too many children around the world that are being sent to the battlefield, the workplace or being prostituted. Just because it's happening at a distance far away, it doesn't mean that we shouldn't object."

Perhaps the boys' intentions are summed up best by a 15-year-old girl who, abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, was forced to kill a young boy trying to escape. "Please do your best to tell the world what is happening to us, the children," she told Amnesty International, "so that other children don't have to pass through this violence."

Emily Wierenga (www.emilywierenga.com) is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives in Neerlandia, AB. For more information on this topic, visit www.childsoldiercycle.ca.

College student fills her Mexico town's toughest job: police chief

Sara Miller Llana

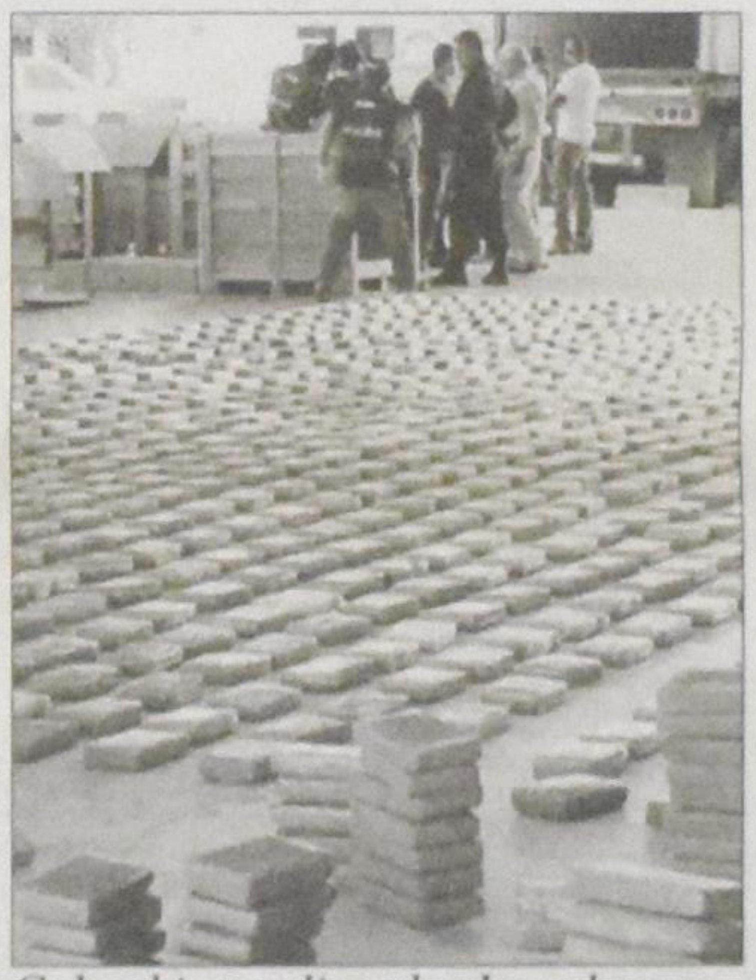
MEXICO CITY, Mexico (CSM) – Some may call her fearless. For others she is foolhardy. The fact remains: 20-year-old Marisol Valles Garcia is the only one who stepped up to become the new police chief in the troubled northern Mexico town of Praxedis G. Guerrero, in the state of Chihuahua.

Twenty-year-old Marisol Valles Garcia (c.) was sworn in Oct. 20 as her town's police chief.

In towns such as this, in the grip of drug trafficking violence, a police chief is often the hardest job to fill. Heads of forces are commonly killed off in the violent turf wars between rival traffickers – sometimes because they are moonlighting for one gang, other times because they are standing in the way of lucrative sales. At times, entire forces have quit en masse in frustration and fear.

But Ms. Valles Garcia, who is finishing her degree in criminology, says that the community must overcome fear and bring morals and values back to ravaged Mexico. "Yes, there is fear," she told CNN en Español Wednesday in an interview. "It's like all human beings. There will always be fear, but what we want to achieve in our municipality is tranquility and security."

Her posting comes as public officials have faced new threats against drug-trafficking organizations. The lead investigator looking into the death of an American tourist in Tamaulipas was recently beheaded. Political candidates have been assassinated. So far this year, a dozen-some mayors have been killed.



Colombian police check packages of cocaine after a 10.5 ton seizure intended for Veracruz, Mexico.

Praxedis G. Guerrero is located in the once peaceful Juarez Valley, just 35 miles south of Ciudad Juarez, the most dangerous city in Mexico, where more than 28,000 people have been killed in drug-related violence since 2006. It is now seeing a mass exodus of residents amid violence between the Sinaloa and Juarez groups.

New strategy: female cops

It might seem that a tough-fisted police chief is the only one fit in the context of such violence. But Valles Garcia says she will take the reverse tactic: using a mostly female, unarmed force to patrol the streets and focus on social programs in schools and community-building. "The weapons we have are principles and values, which are the best weapons for prevention," she said. "Our work will be pure prevention. We are not going to be doing anything else other than prevention." Her force is one of more than 2,000 municipal police forces throughout Mexico. Some of them have been corrupted by drug traffickers even though organized crime is not the responsibility of local police. The administration of President Felipe Calderón is trying to push through police reform that would centralize local forces under state control.

A member of the Army watches the incineration of fourteen tons of drugs in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.

Firearms obtained in the US account for an estimated 95 percent of Mexico's drug-related killings.

Columns

Principalities & Powers
David T. Koyzis

The rights of communities

Last month the leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, Michael Ignatieff, paid a visit to Redeemer University College, where he participated in an open forum with students, faculty, staff and others from the larger community. He was joined by three other people, including Liberal Member of Parliament John McKay, representing Scarborough-Guildwood. Our new president, Dr. Hubert Krygsman, introduced Ignatieff, kicking off the subsequent discussion.

In my estimation, the event was a success, and I found Ignatieff, most of whose writings I have read, to be an impressive yet unpretentious person, willing to engage his audience and to speak honestly. I was particularly struck by his willingness to air his disagreement with McKay over the latter's private member's bill C-300 on corporate accountability. Afterwards some of us were privileged to join Ignatieff and his wife at a reception in their honour.

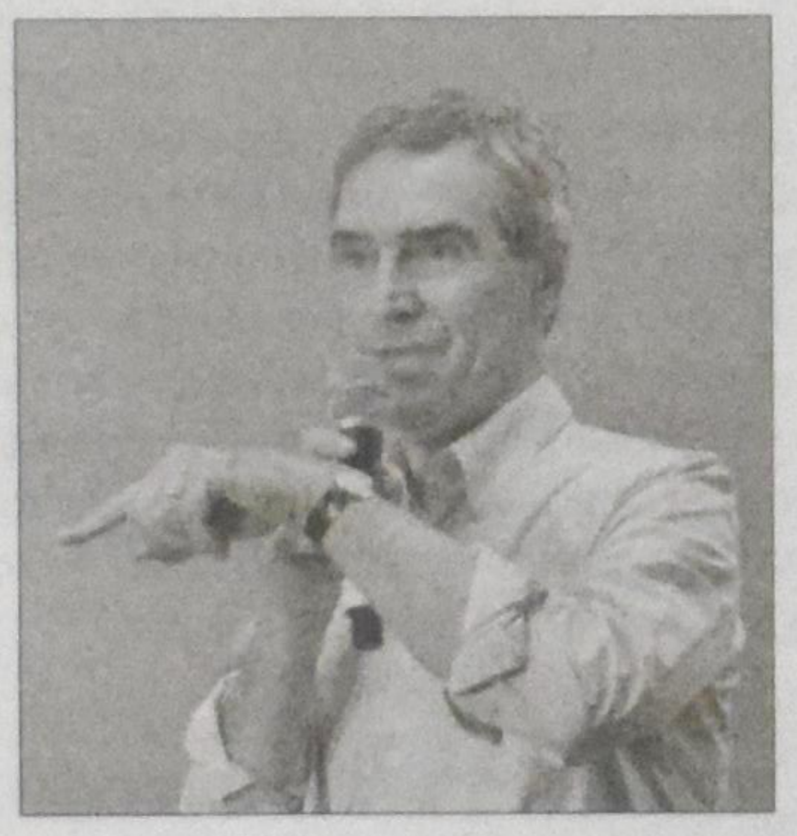
During the forum itself I was able to ask him a question based on two of his books. In his 2001 book, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, Ignatieff writes:

> Rights are meaningful only if they confer entitlements and immunities on individuals; they are worth having only if they can be enforced against institutions like the family, the state, and the church. . . . There will always be conflicts between individuals and groups, and rights exist to protect individuals (p. 67).

Yet in his 1984 book, *The Needs of Strangers*, he seemed to have more appreciation for the role of communities in people's lives:

> Rights language offers a rich vernacular for the claims an individual may make on or against the collectivity, but it is relatively impoverished as a means of expressing individuals' needs *for* the collectivity (p. 13).

In light of these, I asked him whether a Jewish charitable organization or a Christian university has a *right* to exist as an explicitly confessional organization? Would the rights of faith-based communities be respected in Michael Ignatieff's Canada?



To no one's surprise, Ignatieff responded that he found this easy to answer: of course there is room for such communities in a diverse country such as our own. He alluded to his having visited a Toronto synagogue two days earlier and his forthcoming trip to a mosque the following week.

I would love to have heard Ignatieff, *the academic*, address this question, which perhaps ought to have been posed as follows: "Based on what you've written, *how* would you justify your support for such institutions, and what sort of support would you envision?"

It is a simple matter to give lip service to communal diversity, but the crunch comes when the rights of a community and an individual conflict. Does a church community have a right to discipline its members if it judges them to have violated biblical principles of faith and life? Or does it violate their freedom of religion in so doing? Would Ignatieff defend the right of a Christian organization to require its employees to be practising believers who live according to biblical standards? It is not clear that his professed liberalism would enable him to do so. After all, a key principle of liberalism is the reduction of all – or at least as many as possible – communities to mere voluntary associations, with no intrinsic differences to distinguish them from each other.

Nevertheless, with some notable historical exceptions, people are often better than their ideologies. Ignatieff now has positive experience of a Christian university, which can only be a good thing.

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Technically Speaking
Derek Schuurman

Pitfalls of social networking

A movie entitled "The Social Network" has recently arrived in theaters. It tells the story of Mark Zuckerberg and the phenomenal and sordid rise of the social networking website called Facebook. "The Facebook" (as it was first called) began 6 years ago in a Harvard dorm room, and has since grown to over 500 million users. Zuckerberg, the 26-year old CEO of Facebook, is the youngest self-made billionaire in the world.

The movie has several references and in-jokes that are familiar to hackers and computer scientists (maybe there are a few *CC* readers who have heard of *wget* and *emacs*). I found it intriguing that a popular Hollywood movie would be made about a computer scientist. But this is not a flattering movie for Zuckerberg, and, by extension, it does not portray computer scientists well.

The meteoric rise of Facebook is not a feel-good story about a bright and virtuous entrepreneur. The promotional posters summarize the movie well: "You don't get to 500 million friends without making a few enemies." The film is adapted from a book with the descriptive title *The Accidental Billionaires: The Founding of Facebook, A Tale of Sex, Money, Genius, and Betrayal.* The film tells the story interspersed with flash-forwards to Zuckerberg sitting in a deposition where he is being sued by other Harvard students and his best friend. The movie portrays the darker side of campus life including sex, drugs and frat parties, and computer science students are portrayed as drunk adolescents who engage in all-night coding marathons.

The movie paints an embarrassing picture of Zuckerberg as an awkward and shrewd outcast. The opening scene depicts an awkward conversation between Zuckerberg and a girl who tells him that the reason girls do not like him is not because he is a geek, but because he's not a nice guy (although more colorful language is used in the movie). The irony, as the screenplay writer Aaron Sorkin is quoted as saying, is that of Zuckerberg ". . . and a group of, one way or another, socially dysfunctional people who created the world's great social-networking site." Although Zuckerberg has claimed that the movie is mostly fiction, in reality he has been targeted with numerous lawsuits and and accusations that he stole the idea for Facebook from other students at Harvard. After viewing the movie, I was reminded of the biblical warning against gaining the whole world but losing your soul. (Mark 8:36)

Behind the pixels

Aside from the stories about its beginnings, Facebook has been criticized numerous times by privacy advocates for their treatment of personal information, shifting privacy policies, and even drew the attention of Canada's privacy commissioner. To the delight of marketers, many users regularly post personal information and status updates in an age of increasing self-display. Some post pictures or messages they later come to regret. Even so, millions of (mostly young) people spend copious amounts of time on social networking sites, often oblivious to the privacy issues.

Shane Hipps, a marketer turned pastor, has written a book called "Flickering Pixels" in which he makes several insightful observations about the relational effects of social networking. He observes that social networks give the illusion of intimacy as people interact with disembodied digital acquaintances. However, he suggests that the artificial intimacy provided by digital connections provides just enough intimacy to act as a substitute for real intimacy. Hipps compares virtual communities to cotton candy: "it goes down easy and satiates our immediate hunger, but it doesn't provide much in the way of sustainable nutrition." He goes on to say that it can spoil our appetite for participating in authentic community which requires intimacy and proximity. Virtual community should not become our preferred way of relating, just as cotton candy should not form the bulk of our diet.

Although many people enjoy using social networks to stay in touch and to keep up with "friends," we need to be discerning in their use. The movie, however accurate it may be, recounts many chapters in Zuckerberg's younger years that he may have come to regret, and that have now been displayed in front of the whole world on the big screen. Ironically, the social network he helped create now provides a concrete record of many more youthful indiscretions – including many of those who view the film.

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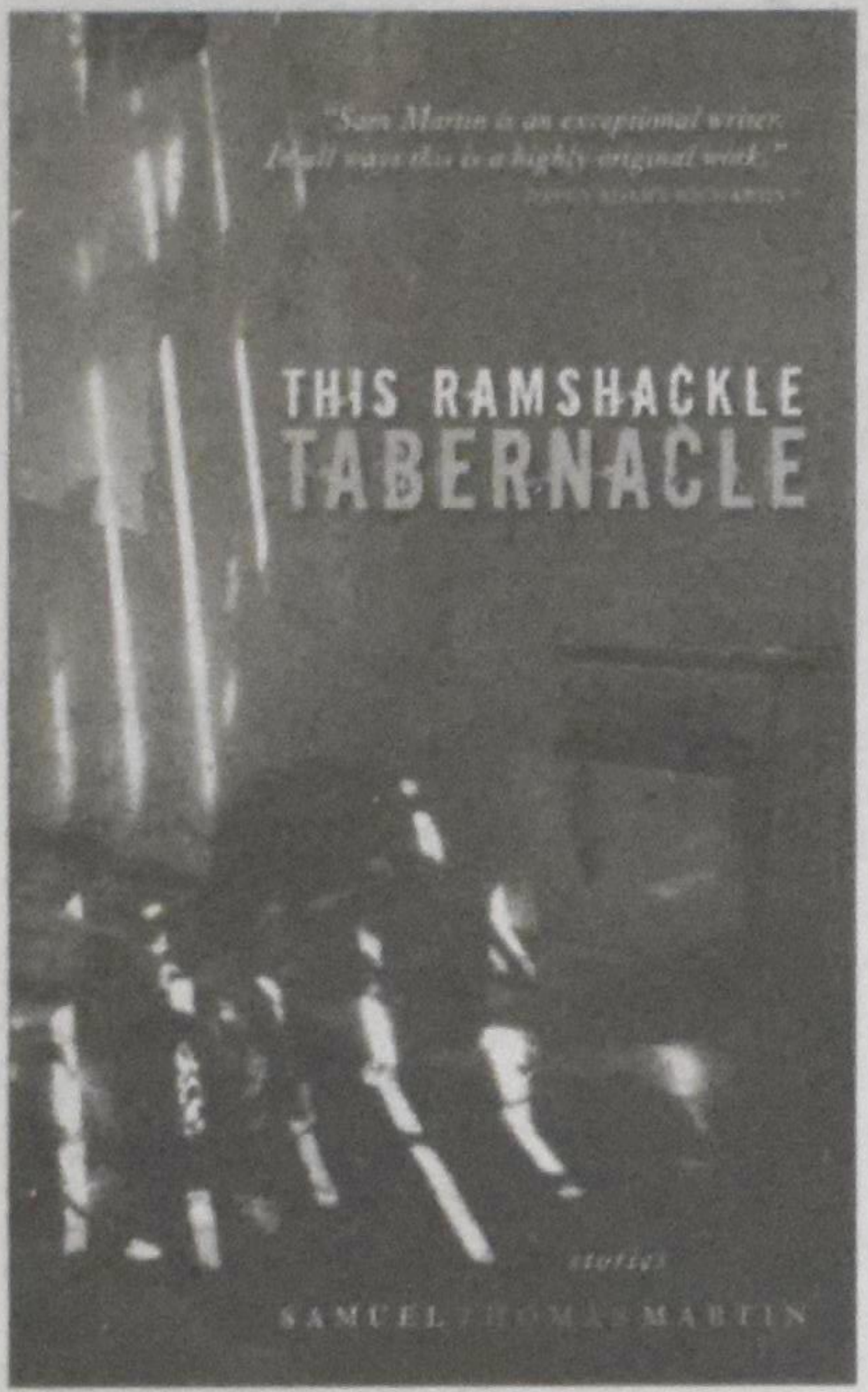
Reviews

God meets the broken in their own Ramshackle Tabernacle



Here's a word of advice. Don't read this book while on vacation in Cape Cod, scenic cottage country of the rich and famous. These linked stories by Samuel Thomas Martin kept forcing me to look elsewhere – at the ragged lives of the sexually abused, the drug-addicted, and the throwaways. They haunted me as I cruised Hyannis Harbour and viewed the Kennedy compound through binoculars.

Martin's characters also come from cottage country, northern Ontario, but they are not rich or famous. Some are Christian, some are not. And some are the outcast, neighbours you see only if you steel yourself not to turn your face away, scabby lepers living banished lives among us.

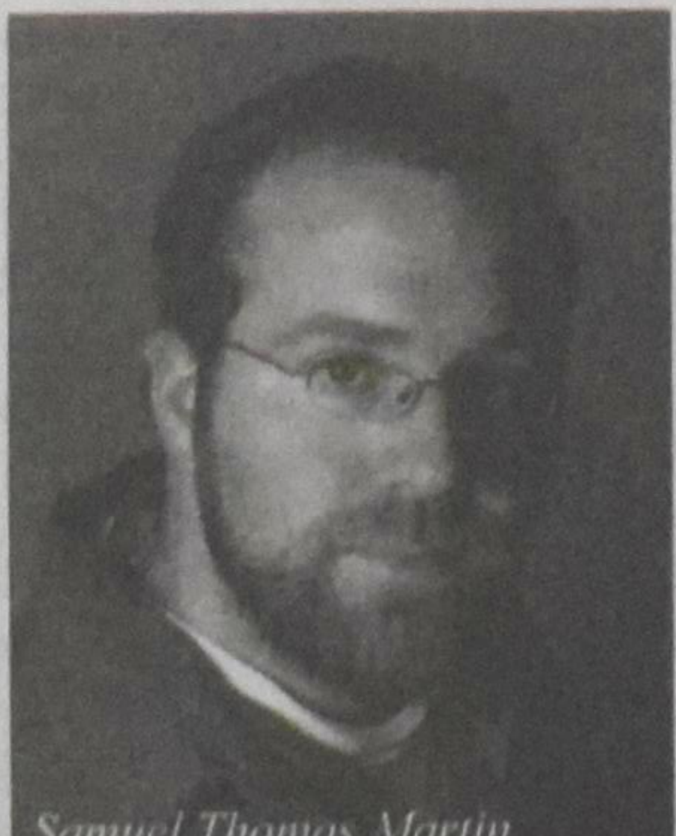
Doug, a failed camp counsellor, wears his rage openly, but tucks his shame away. Drug addict Harold commits murder. Ben leBou stabs his abusive father. Upon his release from prison, he gets mauled by a grizzly, survives, sort of, and finally, calling out to God, tries to shoot himself in an agony of multiplied pain.

After you blink to reduce the intensity of this magnified focus on the sordid and horrific, you begin to discern that a heart of glory glimmers in the midst of all this darkness. God dwells here. Just as he did in the Old Testament, lodged in a portable temple among a stiff-necked and stubborn people, God has pitched his tent with these tainted characters from the Muskokas. His holiness is a tarp hanging over Doug and Harold and Ben whether they know it or not.

This camouflaged God, "shrouding himself in the tent of darkness, veiling his approach with dark rain clouds," (Ps. 18:11) has not abandoned his creatures. He is a hunter, tracking and claiming his own. In the guise of perky lifeguard, Krysta, he offers Doug a redemptive gift of hope. God is also cloaked in the matronly neighbour who grandly welcomes a misfit kid with a black eye into her home as "Mr. Harold Witaker." Years later, no one cares to know his name. On the street he is "guy," "dude" and "princess." Moments before he bashes in the head of the only other person who addresses him by his real name, Harold sees a great blue "God's Eye" stained glass window. Its sad gaze pierces him, but he is finally seen and known once more. The baptism of tenderness he experienced as a child splashing around in the lake with a woman named Vicky has been confirmed.

The organic wholeness of these stories is shaped by this deft crafting of relationships and imagery. Ben does not suffer alone. God is in the devotionals that he uses to roll smokes. God is in the room: "The unfinished walls warped and sagging like the damp nylon walls of a tent in the rain." Divine immanence tabernacles with him even in his despair. Such dovetailed details lend a patient hand-rubbed lustre to the book. It is decidedly not, as I heard Angela Antle say in a CBC interview with Martin, a "sort of a lazy man's novel."

In *Shekinah,* the defiant Ziggy, who crosses himself and gives God the finger in the same gesture, mutters, "Show yourself then." In *The Killing Tree,* his nephew Bill had also asked for a sign. They are granted their wish. Ziggy and Bill are visited with a bewildering glimpse of resurrection glory in the powerful prayer of their friend Dan, "the old prophet who dwells in the wrinkled tabernacle of his eighty-five-year old body." What's left is whether they will believe this "lacerating certainty of a miracle."


Samuel Thomas Martin

Sam Martin's stories are not for everyone. Although the first and last story bookend the whole with hope, not every reader will recognize the salvific embrace of the structure. The violent conflicts and raw language are intended to be disturbing. The edginess of a story like *Becoming Maria,* for example, where a sexually confused teen meets Jesus as her lover in a dream, is a risky business that will hinder the acceptance of this book in some Christian circles.

I, too, tend to prefer a safe, inoffensive neighbourhood, my own sanctified Cape Cod, where no one confronts me with abuse, sexual aberration, stark raving loneliness, or naked human need. But God's heart is bigger. He resides with the fallen. He summons me out into the streets and into the wilderness, to believe with Dan "that not one bird is shot from the sky that God doesn't know about." These stories invite me look my neighbour in the eye, and see God looking back at me.

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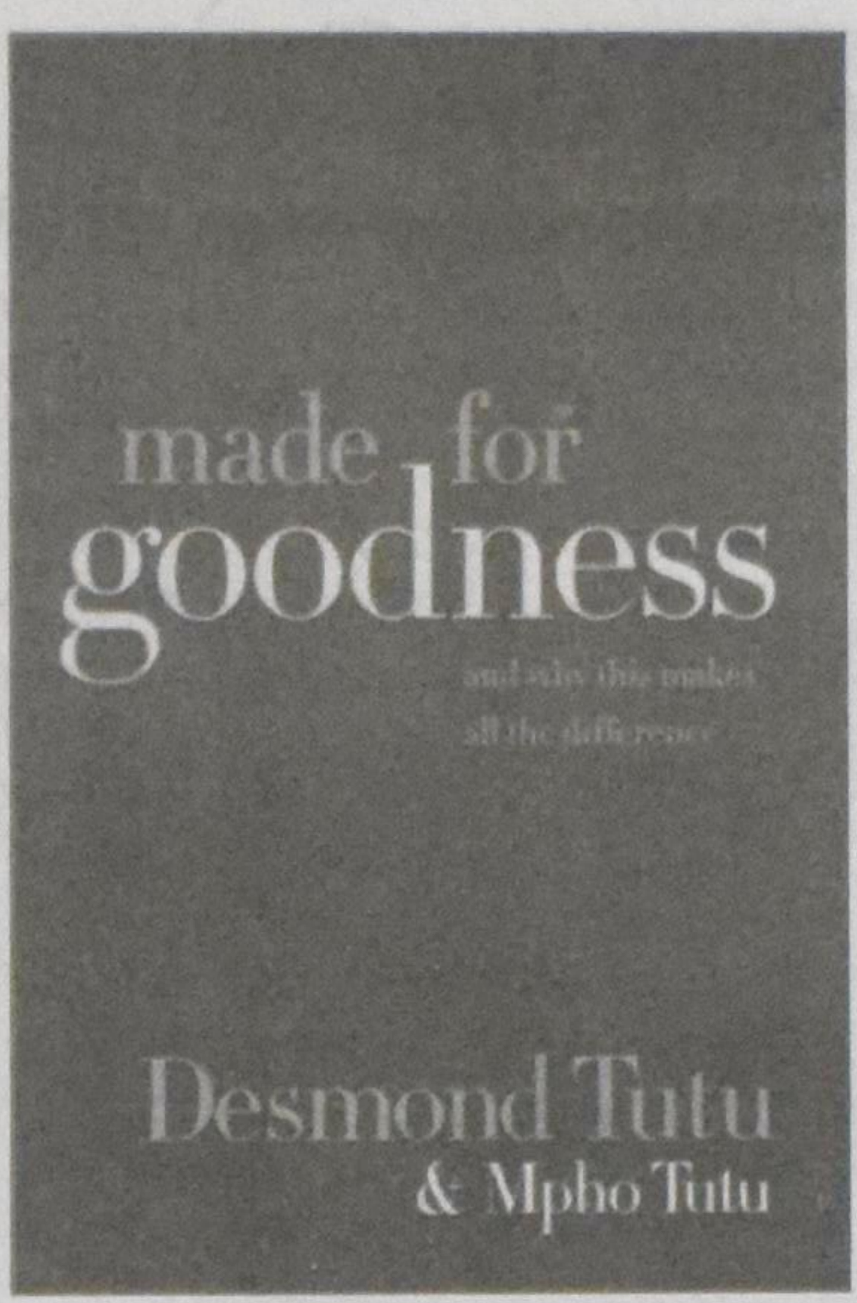

Desmond Tutu explains that we are *Made for Goodness (and why it makes all the difference)*

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

As the title of their book suggests, Desmond Tutu and his daughter, Mpho Tutu, claim that we are made for goodness. Renowned on the international stage as chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to investigate apartheid's horrors, the elder Tutu has obviously been used by God to accomplish much good.

Desmond Tutu

Though Jesus himself said, "No one is good – except God alone" (Mark 10:18), the authors claim that we are "good at the core" (pg.200). How then do they deal with the evil that manifests itself on the individual, national, and international level? They point readers to Genesis and conclude, "In the Bible, depravity does not enter creation in a tidal wave of wrongness. It comes in as a slow, silent leak, drip by quiet drip, until the earth is flooded" (pg. 89). This "drip by quiet drip" of depravity manifests itself in evil deeds. However, the Tutus claim, "God knows that there is something in us that does not acquiesce in sin. Dame Julian calls it a 'divine will' that resides in us. That divine will cannot and never will sin" (pg. 134). They add, "In spite of the evil we do, there is a goodness in us that is unstained by sin" (pg. 136).

The Apostle Paul argues for the truth that is radically opposed to the Tutus' theology. Quoting from the Old Testament, he wrote, "'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; **there is no one who does good, not even one**'" (Romans 3:10-12). Paul recognized that reality in his own life as well when he wrote, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Romans 7:18a).

The authors claim that "the practices of goodness . . . are not hard disciplines to learn" (pg. 92). However, they don't emphasize a foundational truth that Jesus expounded on, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). First, we are only righteous because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice for us: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Second, only through the power of the resurrected Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit can we "do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10b).

In their theology, the Tutus seem to have focused only on God's loving nature and not on his just character. Perhaps this has led them to the following conclusion: "Ultimately, the reality of heaven cannot tolerate the existence of hell. Even our worst enemies are God's beloved children. What kind of God could endure the sight of God's own children screaming in eternal pain? If we believe in the good God, we must believe that we are all made to inhabit heaven" (pp. 134-135).

Jesus, however, warned about the reality of hell: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both body and soul in hell" (Matthew 10:28). Despite the many fundamental ways this reader disagreed with the Tutus, *Made for Goodness* was worthwhile reading. The authors' stories of courage, faith, and forgiveness in the post-apartheid era made for inspirational reading. Those of us who have lived in freedom have much to learn from those who opposed racism and claimed astounding victories.

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This is how the world ends:
Linkin Park's tour of the apocalypse in *A Thousand Suns*

Brett Alan Dewing

Linkin Park's new album, *A Thousand Suns*, marks a new chapter in a career that many predicted would end years ago. Pioneering the genre of rap-core, Linkin Park seemed like a passing trend, a hot new band that would flame out as their audience outgrew them.

Instead, something else has happened. While they may not be cranking out hits as big as "Numb" or "In the End", they have spent the last decade maturing into something their fans can relate to: a confused, jaded, angry group of almost-middle-agers who are discouraged by the face of the world around them and the lack of change their youthful actions have brought.

Their last album, *Minutes to Midnight*, was their best work to date, a sad-angry elegy of a world on the eve of destruction It seemed to say, "This is how the world has been to me in all its beauty and savagery."

With the cover design and title of this new disc, I was prepared for the fallout of that clock hitting midnight. And indeed *A Thousand Suns* is a wonderful picture of the end of the world. Instead of exploding, as the title might suggest (maybe I've just read that The Sentry has "the power of a thousand exploding suns" one – or 30 – too many times), this album finds the world imploding, rushing into one point, stretching and distorting human history in the rush to the end.

And amid that implosion, the band cries out for mercy, sinks into despair, and lashes out at their fellow humans by turns. "Burning in the Skies" repeats the haunting chorus, "I'm swimming in the smoke of bridges I've burned. So don't apologize: I'm losing what I don't deserve." Current single "The Catalyst" pleads "God bless us everyone. We're a broken people living under loaded gun. And it can't be out-fought, can't be out-done, can't be out-matched, can't be out-run. God save us everyone when we burn inside the fires of a thousand suns for the sins of hands, the sins of our tongues, the sins of our fathers, the sins of our young."

And so, God is present in this shattering cosmos, and his presence offers the hope of purpose and the fear of damnation. That's pretty good for a mainstream album.

Sadly, *A Thousand Suns*, while perhaps *saying* more than *Minutes to Midnight*, cannot compete with it in terms of rocking songs. The latter is an onslaught of catchy hooks, but this newer offering plays more as an album. So much so, that the final track – "A Thousand Suns: The Full Experience" – repeats the entire album as one track. Amid an increasingly single-driven culture, Linkin Park is begging their listeners to experience this work as a full creation, beginning to end. And that is something to be applauded. I only wish the apocalypse had a few catchier beats.

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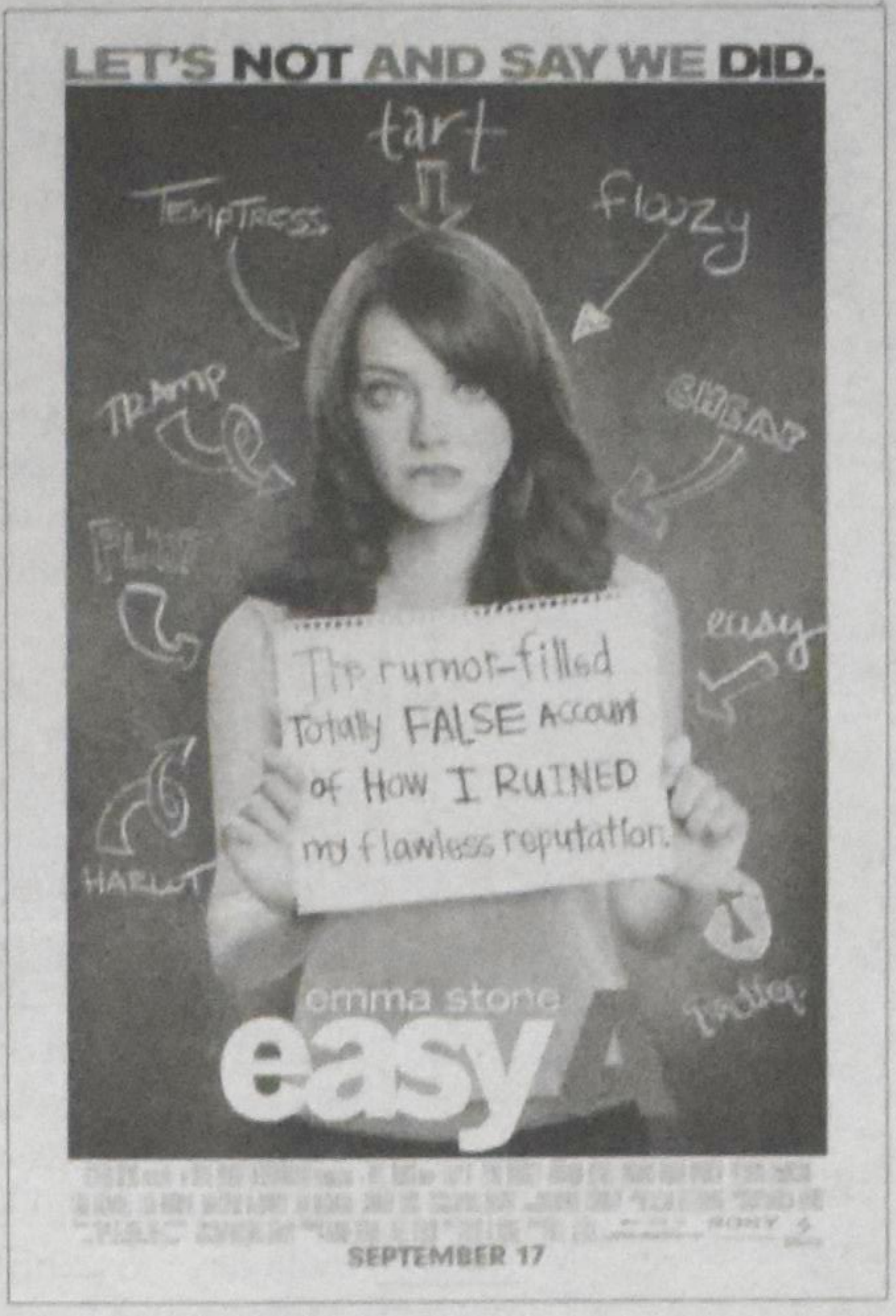
Easy A makes the grade by asking difficult questions



Walter Miedema

To say that *Easy A* is a clever film would be a bit of an understatement. The dialogue is snappy, intelligent and much of the time sarcastic. This sarcasm is also one of the main sources of humour in the film.

The film falls into a long line of movies and television shows where twenty-somethings play teens, in a mostly believable fashion. The main reason that this works is that the film addresses aspects of identity, community and sexuality that adults as well as teens struggle with. The best teen movies, such as the movies of John Hughes, tacitly acknowledge this, but in *Easy A* it is overt. The adults in this film clearly struggle with issues surrounding their sexuality and identity in their present as well as their past.

Easy A stars Emma Stone as Olive, a formerly ordinary and anonymous high schooler who suddenly gains notoriety when she is overheard lying to a friend about getting intimate on a date. The rumour spreads like wildfire through gossip. Olive finds that she enjoys her newfound notoriety and does nothing to stop it. In fact, she aids a gay friend who is constantly tortured because of his sexuality by faking a sexual encounter with him during a party at a popular girl's house. While this has the desired affect of lessening the bullying her gay friend receives, it also leads other unpopular male students, who have heard what she is really doing, to ask for her assistance in gaining popularity. In exchange for a variety of gift certificates, Olive agrees to do nothing to deny their claims that they have slept with her.

Olive's new reputation causes much agitation among the student body, especially among those who identify themselves as moral Christians. The film's title is derived from a reference to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, which Olive's English class is studying. During one discussion on the themes of this book, one of Olive's Christian classmates spitefully suggests that she should wear an A on her wardrobe, and from that moment on, playing up her new reputation, she does.

Christians do not come off well in this film. At one point when Olive goes to two of the local churches to get advice and to find someone to tell the truth of her situation, she finds one church empty and the pastor of the other church unwilling to concede facts even for the sake of communication. All that Olive's Christian classmates seem to be more concerned with is condemning Olive's supposedly loose morals and changing the name of the school's sports team from the Blue Devils to the Woodchucks.

Most of the adults at Olive's school seem to be just as confused about their lives as Olive is about her own. This is especially true about the school's guidance counselor played by Lisa Kudrow. Kudrow's character is in fact so confused that she asks a student to lie for her.

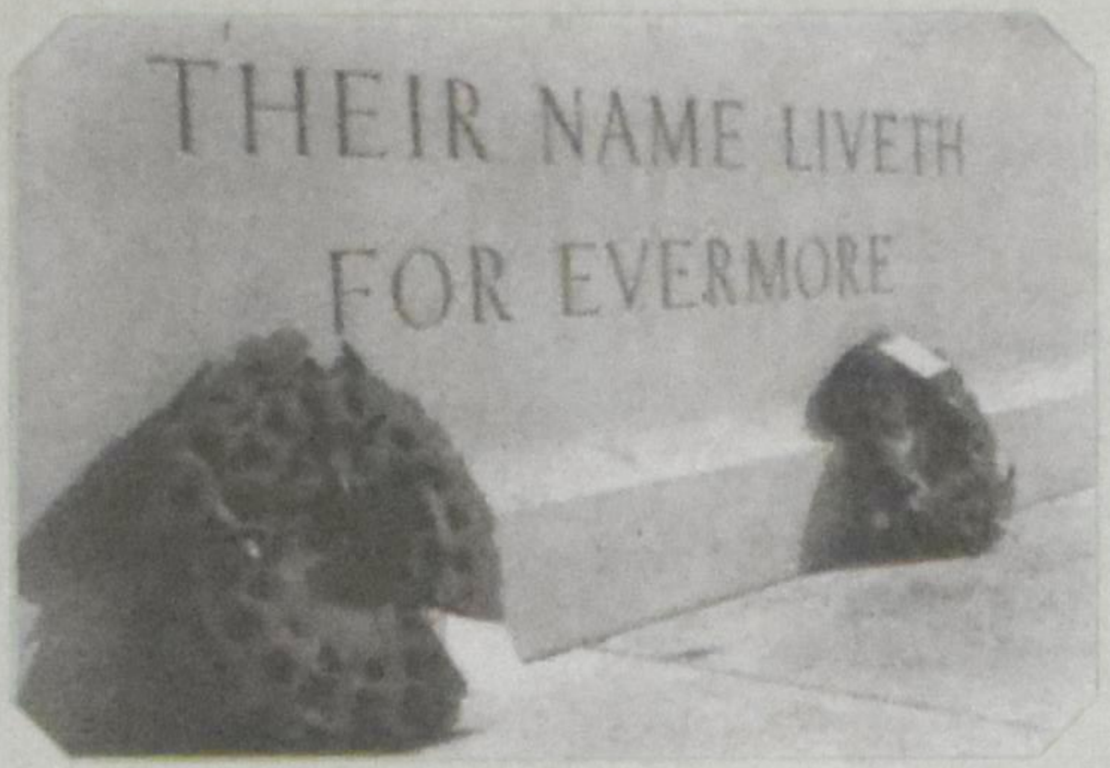
The most sane people in the film seem to be Olive's parents, played by Stanley Tucci and Patricia Clarkson. They are supportive of their daughter but at the same time concerned about their daughters change in appearance. This is demonstrated by her mother's comment, "You kind of look like a stripper," which is immediately followed by her father's qualification, "but a high end stripper, like for governors or athletes." This typifies their liberal attitudes. Olive's mother also seems to be the only character in the movie who is willing to talk with Olive honestly about the struggles of being a teen. The most important aspect of Olive's relationship with her parents is that they are able to be honest and open with her.

This movie has a lot to say about living in a community as an individual. Its ultimate message is a positive one that encourages deriving self-worth from one's own strengths and being willing to let people accept you for who you are. It also criticizes the mistakes made by society in the way individuals relate to those who are obviously in situations where they are struggling. If anything, it suggests that institutions like churches and schools do not deal well with helping youth learn to respect themselves. The most honest interactions occur in Olive's relationship with her parents and with Todd, Olive's off-beat love interest, who is able to see through the trampy persona she projects to her school.

There is much from this movie that Christians can learn. The fact that the subject matter centres around sexuality will make some viewers uncomfortable. However no actual sexual encounters are portrayed on screen in this film. In a humourous as well as frank manner, sexuality and identity are addressed in this film in a way that will serve to spur honest discussion, especially in Christian circles. Anything that encourages discussion of this kind is valuable.

Walter Miedema is a recent graduate of Calvin Theological Seminary currently working, living and writing in Vancouver.

Features



In Gratitude

It is the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh
month and we
remember.

We remember those brave men who said "goodbye" to
families and friends
to free others struggling to put an end to
invasion.
We remember those left behind, whose hearts with The
Union Jack entwined
as their sons and sweethearts they did consign to the
conflict
a world away.
We remember others, too, who watched with pride, through
tear-dimmed eyes,
the Stars & Stripes passing by while untried voices chanted
that they would not come back
until it was over
Over There.*

But mostly, we remember the carefree youth
who left sunny fields of goldenrod to be buried beneath
foreign sod
where the poppies grow
In Flanders Fields. *
And those who returned, bereft of eyes, limbs and pieces of
their minds,
forever left behind in
Courcelette, Vimy Ridge, the Argonne Forest.
Still, it finally did come to pass that those in the trenches,
who choked on "mustard" gas, could summon a weak smile.
For the ones they had come to save could breathe freedom
at last.

So now, on this new eleventh day of the eleventh month
we would raise our voices to join those before us
praising in one swelling chorus, the Almighty One
who keeps us all.
"O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home!" *

For we do remember.
Ah, yes, we do
remember.

– Chris Ahlemann

* *Over There,* a song written in 1917 by George M. Cohan. Mr. Cohan was later awarded a Congressional medal for this tribute to the United States entrance into World War I.

* *In Flanders Fields,* a poem written in 1915 by Canadian Lieut.-Col. John McCrae. Colonel McCrae died in France January 28, 1918.

*From the hymn *O God, Our Help in Ages Past,* written by Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

Chris Ahlemann is a freelance writer living in Des Moines, Iowa. She has had over 400 pieces published in magazines and newspapers of various Christian denominations.

The last lesson

...and other lessons learned from a grand ol' lady

Jon Dykstra, *with a lot of help from his brother Jeff*

My grandma died a few years ago at the age of 93. She lived for more than 25 years as a widow and after her Henk died she often wondered why God hadn't taken her then too – all her children were grown up, so what did she have left to do here?

She hadn't exactly forgotten about her grandchildren, but like many grandparents, she did underestimate how much she had to offer the younger generation. She didn't understand how much her grandchildren still needed to learn from her.

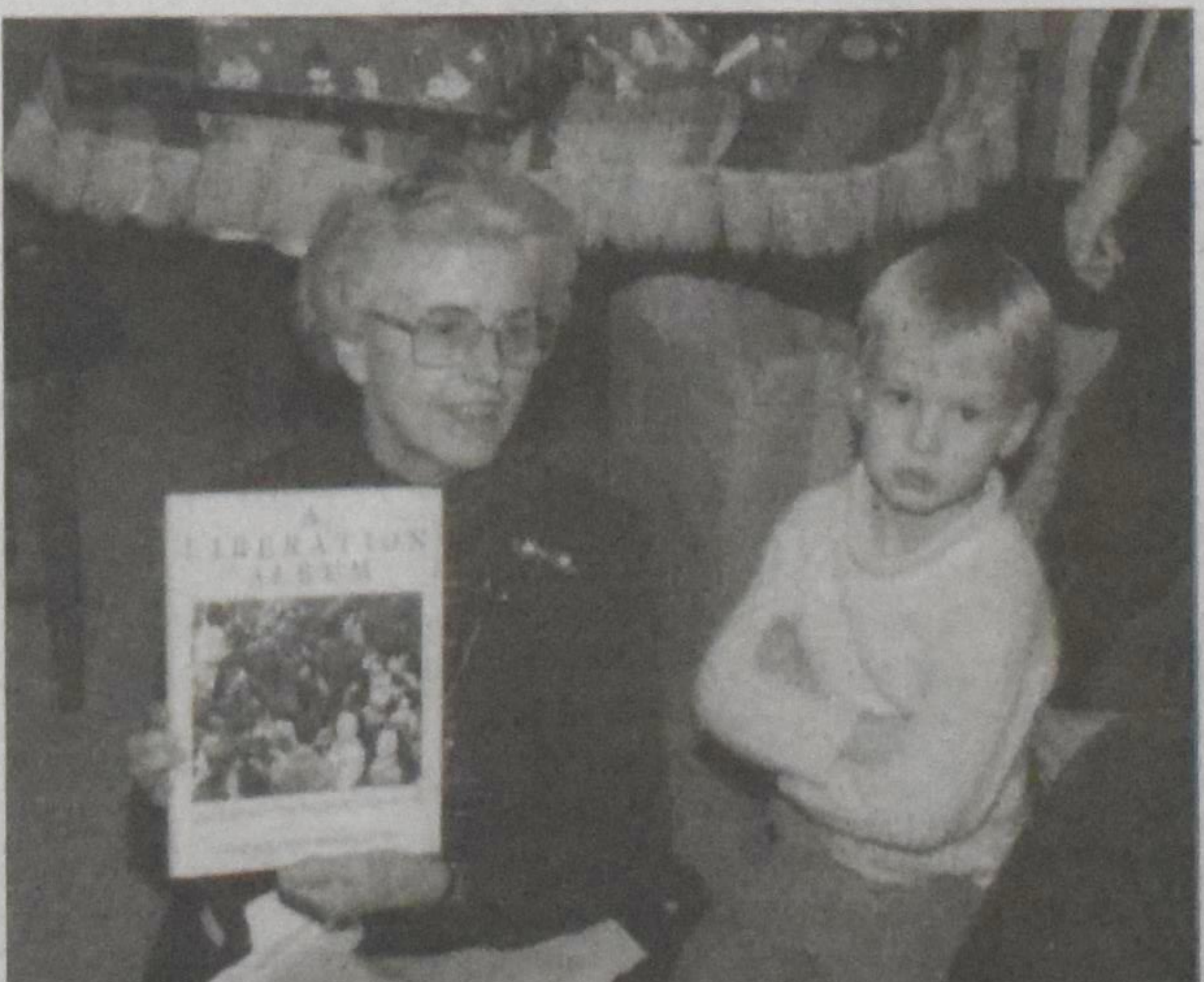
60's – Hello!

Grandma was already in her 60's when most of the grandchildren first got to know her, and the lessons began immediately. The very first lesson she taught us was that it was important to eat *all* the food on our plates. The second lesson? That whether we ate all the food on our plates or not, our grandma loved us. She modeled and taught us about unconditional love – the exact type of love God gives us. Parents practice this love too, but it isn't always as clear. Parents are, after all, the ones who have to punish, and prod, while grandparents can simply adore, spoil and hug.

70's – Learning never stops

There are other lessons too, that are best learned from a grandparent. Grandma taught us that purity can be funny – that one can get laughs without being crude or rude. She was a very elegant lady but she wanted us to know her generation had the secret to good clean fun; they knew that the very best type of humor was silly humor. So even though she had the regal bearing of a queen, she never passed up a chance to model the large fuzzy slippers she got one Christmas. And when we picked her up at her apartment she always took a moment, with a sly grin, to quickly say goodbye to her collection of stuffed animals.

Even in her 70's she had an innocent child-like sense of humor. A favorite example is of the time when she was out with one daughter and a couple of grandsons. The foursome was out walking when they came upon a set of revolving doors. Her daughter, our dear mom, went first, followed by little James. But then it was my turn . . . the grin on my face let my mother know in advance what her urchin child had planned. But just as she was about to give me a stern warning, in stepped grandma. The two of us, urchin child and tiny, elegant, 70-something-year-old grandma, started going round and round and round again in that revolving door until we both got so dizzy and weak from laughing we tumbled out.



80's – She's seen it all before

By the time grandma hit her eighties, her grandchildren were just about all grownup. But she still had a lot to teach us. We were leaving our Christian schools, entering university and experiencing for the first time just how depraved the world could be. Our gentle, delicate grandma knew all about it – in her eighty years on this earth she had seen it all.

One story she often told to encourage us, was about the day the Germans invaded her native land of Holland. That day she had looked up to see so many German paratroopers floating down to earth they blotted out the sky. The sight convinced her that the end had come, that the world must be over – how could it ever get worse than this? But it wasn't the end, and though German power seemed invincible, God brought liberation. Her point was clear: don't despair – our God can overcome any evil.

90's – Last but not least

In her nineties grandma start showing signs of Alzheimer's, and began getting confused about what decade it was, and what country she was in. She soon lost the ability to speak English, and in her last months couldn't walk further than a few dozen feet without huffing. Her body was gone, and her mind was failing her too. On her better days, when her mind was clear enough that she could understand what was happening to her, she got very frustrated. Once again she wanted to know, why was she still here? What did the Lord still have left for her to do?

The truth was she wasn't able to do anything for anyone anymore. But she could still *be* helped. This wasn't an easy time for grandma and sometimes she vented her frustration on her children. But she loved to be helped by her grandchildren – anything we did for her would be met with a smile or a pat on the arm. She was once again teaching us about unconditional love – Christ-like love – this time, how to receive it. She responded to us, as we should respond to our giving, gracious God.

Conclusion

Grandma lived to be 93, and while she sometimes thought that her job here was done long ago, her grandchildren are very grateful God gave us these many more years with her. Grandparents are such a blessing.

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Onward Christian Soldiers

Daphne Simpkins

Mildred Budge stopped in her tracks when she read the yellow flyer hanging from the telephone pole outside the church: "Come enjoy a delicious breakfast and gourmet coffee in the Disciples Class."

It was unbelievable. She shook her head and kept walking, only to see another yellow flyer just like it posted on the next pole that lined the sidewalk leading into the church building.

Fran came up behind Mildred and read the words over her shoulder. "I've never seen anything like that in my life. It's worse than the choir calling late at night, after I was already in bed and having a really good dream, and trying to recruit me with food because they like the way I sing in the pew."

"You don't sing that well," Mildred said, squinting to see if Fran thought otherwise.

"Of course I don't."

The late-night call from a volunteer with the choir was still a sore subject with Fran. There were written rules and there were unwritten rules, and inside the church not calling after nine o'clock at night unless someone had died fit in the latter category: you didn't do it. So did posting yellow flyers. Fran reached over and ripped it off. "I think we need to have a pow-wow with the other girls."

Mildred nodded, thinking that the timing was bad because the Berean Sunday school class had only recently switched after a hundred years of eating brunch together on the fifth Sunday of the month to fasting and praying for the sick and the lost instead of chowing down. It had been a big deal that had happened almost casually, and Mildred was curious about what might happen next if they found themselves in competition with the Disciples who were now using a traditional church lady ministry of food to woo others to their classroom.

Fran and Mildred walked in together down the first hallway that led to the classroom where the all-women Sunday school class met. The smell of coffee perking permeated the rooms and the hallway, and the sound of a piano tinkling in the distance proved that someone was getting ready to lead her particular class in a praise song before getting down to studying the Bible – what Sunday school was really about.

Anne Henry was standing in the doorway of their classroom holding another advertisement; and when she saw Fran's she waved hers and whispered incredulously, "Gourmet coffee!"

Women (who had not wanted to give up the brunch on the fifth Sunday) congregated around Anne, who was shaking her head, "We're going to have to do something about this. No doubt about it."

"Why?" Mildred asked. "If that class wants to cook, what is that to us?"

Anne Henry rolled her eyes and gave Fran a look that said: Explain it to her, will you?

"Mildred, now you know that women have a reputation to show hospitality" Fran said. "It's not only about the cooking; it's about being ready to serve. To anticipate needs. To have the stuff other people want." Fran held up her handbag and shook it. The loot inside made a comforting sound. "Yours is the same way. You're loaded with Kleenex, aspirin, cough drops – those imported Italian candies with a little bit of honey in the middle for a raspy throat – and all the stuff that anyone could need, and…."

Anne Henry jumped in. "Let me put it another way, Millie. We're the equivalent of Christian marines. There's the army and the navy, and then there is the marines – the ones everyone counts on to hold down the fort when there's no one else. That's us." It was a statement that one had to take on faith, because, unlike a marine, Anne Henry was very glamorous; she was even wearing pearls.

"And now some newbies in the Disciples class are offering a hot breakfast . . ." Anne Henry said.

"It's got to be frozen biscuits microwaved. That's all it can be," Fran conjectured.

"What about this gourmet coffee?" Anne Henry asked.

The ladies turned and eyed their own familiar urn that was ready for them each week. Somewhere in the building was a deacon who made the coffee for the congregating Sunday schoolers. No one knew exactly who he was because he wanted to keep his right hand from knowing what his left hand was doing, but he made pretty good coffee: not too weak, not too strong. And he was faithful. It was always ready.

Offering and drinking something called gourmet coffee was a slap in that good deacon's face; it was as simple as that.

"I hope the church isn't paying for gourmet coffee," Fran said. She was a staunch proponent of conservative fiscal stewardship. Before anyone had a chance to theorize, Fran answered her own question: "Surely not. Surely they are taking up a collection and buying it themselves. Probably Starbucks from the grocery store. What else could it be?"

"You don't suppose they have one of those machines that drips espresso into those little white cups?" Mildred asked.

"Well, if they do, that's going too far. I know that," Fran said.

"Where exactly is the Disciples' classroom?" Mildred Budge asked, sniffing. She liked espresso very much.

Anne Henry and Fran smiled at the same time. While the flyer was impressively prepared – the words were spelled correctly and everything – someone had forgotten to name the location of the Disciples classroom. No one said a word out loud. Not one of the Bereans was indiscreet enough to point out that kind of speck in another Disciple's eye.

Instead, Anne balled up her flyer first, and then Fran copied her. They tossed the flyers in the trash can and laid down their capacious purses so they could pour cups of regular coffee from the same urn they always used, and which one of them kept washed on the Q.T., because it had been discussed that while a man might very well be able to make coffee, he couldn't clean a coffee pot the way a woman would.

"Well, if we ever revisit that idea about hosting a brunch on the fifth Sunday maybe we'll put up a flyer too and add the room number," Anne suggested.

That was how a member of the Berean Sunday school class suggested that a previous decision was now up for reconsideration. Without a formal discussion and without a formal vote (for that could prove awkward), the next fifth Sunday of a month, the Berean women would arrive with their signature dishes and create a hospitable buffet of egg and sausage casseroles, cheese grits, bacon biscuits, mixed fruit salad, blueberry muffins, banana bread and juices with coffee – only regular, but served hot from a clean urn.

"When did we start advertising Sunday school – that's what I'd like to know?" Fran demanded.

"Is that the same thing as testifying?" Mildred asked.

Fran shook her head. Anne touched her beads, a strand of large pearls in a variety of colours that all matched somehow. Mildred coveted them and then did the equivalent of plucking out her envious eye: she closed her peepers and tried to shake away the image of how pretty those pearls were.

Fran sat down and took a thoughtful sip of her coffee. When the next fifth Sunday of the month approached, they might very well post a flyer, too. What colour should it be? Not yellow. Not pink; the members of the class were past the pink stage. What colour was a Berean? Fran wondered.

Mildred leaned over and whispered to Fran, "I guess not everybody wanted to fast after all."

"It was mainly you, Mildred," Fran said flatly without looking at her friend. "We were all just trying to please you." She didn't add: look where it's gotten us now?

Rebuked, Mildred sat back in her chair thinking one more time soberly: It's a big job, this – working out one's salvation with fear and trembling. The Bible advises fasting. Really it does. Mildred thought the words, but she did not say them.

"And our flyer will have the classroom location on it," Fran declared as she blew on her coffee. Fran blew more than she sipped. Mildred had never really been sure if her best friend really liked coffee or she just liked something to hold.

Anne Henry walked over to the piano and opened the hymnal and began to rifle the pages looking for an anthem to kick off the class as other members arrived – some holding gourmet coffee discovered on their way to their home class. Anne Henry saw the foreign cups.

Temptation took many forms. So did betrayal.

Taking a deep breath, she called out, "Shall we sing Onward Christian Soldiers?"

It was a rallying cry, a unifying anthem: a reminder that in their way church ladies are the marines.

The members of the class nodded with conviction, and holding their different cups of coffee, began dutifully and in the spirit of sisterhood to sing as one.

Daphne Simpkins (DaphneSimpkins@Prodigy.net) has been writing "The Adventures of Mildred Budge" for the past few years. Before she became Miss Budge's biographer, she wrote a memoir of her father's journey through Alzheimer's disease: The Long Good Night.

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Features

Thoughts about Islam and Christianity – Part III

CC continues the discussion of how Christianity and Islam relate to each other in this six-part series. The two participants are John H. Boer and Bert den Boggende. The two scholars wrote their answers to each question independently of each other. There may be overlap, there maybe differences of opinion, we don't know. We hope our readers will benefit from this discussion. We also encourage readers to join the discussion via letters to the editor or comments on our website.

Question 3: What are some frequent misconceptions about Islam and how do we counter them?

It's hard to know your Muslim neighbour

John H. Boer

Probably the most common misconception is that all Muslims are the same. They *are* with respect to certain core doctrines and the practice of the five pillars, but that's as far as it goes. If you're a Christian, you will realize that there are all kinds of Christians in this world, ranging from raving fundamentalists to rank liberals. The same is true for Islam. There is folk Islam that is usually entwined with local religion, and there is the Islam of the serious student. There are fundamentalist, militant, pious, secular, tolerant, intolerant, moderate, mystical and political Muslims.

And since Muslims are reared in many different cultures, Pakistani and Nigerian Muslims are again different from each other. There are many "denominations," even with the main split being between Sunni and Shi'ite. There are five main legal traditions, all of them considered equally orthodox. Some wear clothes we explicitly associate with Islam, while others follow Western fashions. So, when you talk of Muslims (the people) or of Islam (the religion), which people or which Islam are you referring to?

Personal contact

In view of this confusion, how can you know your Muslim neighbour or colleague? You can do so only to a certain extent by socializing with her, him or them. You can to some extent know a specific Muslim or a specific community of Muslims by personal interaction. That still does not mean you know Muslims in general.

An added difficulty in the West is that militant Muslims tend to hide themselves among the moderates. Even the moderate Muslims may not always realize that a specific person is a militant and a member of a sleeper group that can be called into militant action at any time and is prepared to do so at any cost to himself.

Some Westerners have a good Muslim neighbour, colleague or friend and conclude from this relationship that all Muslims are peaceful, to be completely accepted at all levels of society and to be fully trusted. Others are more influenced by the negative images they pick up from the media or from hysterical writings published by certain anti-Muslim groups. They may consider all Muslims dangerous and think of Islam as a threat to Western society.

Like stereotypes, all these misconceptions are based on distorted truths. There are reasons for them to develop; they are not altogether wrong. What *is* wrong is their generalization. There are peaceful Muslims and militant Muslims; friendly Muslims and hostile Muslims, but no generalization covers them all. *The cure for our various misconceptions is to get realistic.* We must be aware of all these differences and react appropriately to the various Muslim individuals and groups we encounter.

Mutual distrust

That said – and, because of its political incorrectness, I hesitate to state what's coming! – we must beware of ever thinking we understand Muslims fully, especially if they have been brought up in a Muslim country or ghetto. Though I keep trying, I find it very difficult to establish genuine friendship with Muslims, and Muslims often tend to resist it. Deep down there always seems to be a degree of mutual suspicion. It is impossible to predict what their reaction will be to a critical event between the West and Islam. Many moderates the world over unexpectedly rejoiced over 9/11. What is needed here is unending patience and then some more.

Many people fear Muslim challenges to secular society and consider them illegitimate. The generation that brought Dutch Calvinism to Canada in the 1950s also challenged Canadian secularism. They did not mean to threaten Canada but to bless it. Many Canadians were offended by this challenge, but these Calvinists persisted and scored some amazing victories that still bless Canadians. Many Muslims similarly challenge Canadian secularism. Some people feel threatened by this Muslim challenge. The Reformed community should remember that Muslims have the same right to challenge Canadian culture in our pluralistic society as did those early Reformed newcomers. "Father" Abraham (Kuyper) himself would have defended their right to challenge the established order.

We should counter their challenges not by repressing their efforts, for we are not here to defend secularism, but by reviving and updating our own Christian principles and once again challenge secularism with the weapons of "*our*" Spirit. Muslims badly need to see a wholistic Christianity in action in our secular context. And who knows, in the course of our simultaneous challenges we could rub shoulders with each other as allies in some common causes, without ignoring the core differences that will keep us separated.

Political divisions reign

Bert den Boggende

Although the pilgrimage to Mecca suggests unity and solidarity of the *ummah*, the Muslim community, Islam has been deeply divided since Muhammad's death. Politics, not dogma, caused the division between Sunnis and Shiites. In order to avoid misunderstandings we need to take a closer look at several divisions and their espoused ideas.

Sunnis, comprising about 80 percent of the Muslim population, believe that Muhammad's successor is strictly a political leader and a protector of the faith, but he is not divinely inspired. It is important to realize that sharia is interpreted differently by four major Sunni schools reflecting divergent geographical, social, historical, and cultural contexts when explaining the Quran, the various Hadith collections, and early community agreements.

The Hanbalis of Saudi Arabia are suspicious of, if not hostile to, reason and recommend the full punishment of the law, e.g. cutting off the hands of thieves. The Malikis of North, Central, and West Africa are rigidly traditionalist. The Shafiis, dominant in East Africa and SE Asia, hold a medial position. The Hanafis, prevailing in the Ottoman and Mughal Empires, the Arab world, Afghanistan and Pakistan, are concerned with theoretical and practical issues. One of their jurists posited that "there is impropriety in visiting a Jew or Christian in their illness."

Hereditary positions

The Shiites, constituting about 15 percent of the Muslim population found mainly in Iran and Iraq, with significant numbers in Lebanon, Syria, South Asia, and Yemen, were often oppressed and disinherited. They believe that the political and religious leadership should be hereditary through the line of Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law. They have an organized clergy. Their imam, who gives guidance in the law, which differs from Sunni law, is thought to be divinely appointed and illumined. Shiite rationalism allows for more latitude in sharia interpretation than the strict literalism of most Sunnis.

Shiites are divided again on the basis of imam succession. For instance, the Seveners trace their roots to the sixth imam, Ismail. The Twelvers or Jafari Shiites, the larger sect, maintain that the twelfth imam, who disappeared, will sometime reappear, a messianic concept. Their council of twelve elect a leader known as the *ayatollah*, who interprets law and scripture. These dissenters were influenced by Aristotle, neo-Platonism, and even Gnosticism, and their rationalism made them hostile to Sufism. Often regarding themselves as the only Muslims and Sunnis as heretics or infidels, The Twelvers didn't accept hadiths transmitted by their enemies.

Some sects went further. The Kharijis, who objected to Ali's compromise and assassinated him, fought jihads against other Muslims, including the Zaidis, partisans of Ali. Their descendants are now called Ibadis and live in Oman, East and North Africa. The Naziri Ismailis were so violent in their tactics that they earned the epithet of Assassins. In 1817 the Shah of Persia gave the Ismaili imam the title of Aga Khan, whose current followers are quite peaceful. They were all puritanical, some even so excessively that they forbade chess and backgammon, dolls for children, and the use of musical instruments.

Discernment needed

The diversity is further complicated by Sufism, a spiritual practice that comes in different guises: ascetics (influenced by Syrian monks), ecstatics, mystics, and antinomians. While rationalist Shiites are usually opposed to Sufism, Sunnis accept it. Their pantheistic streak and the vision that human beings could become one with God, if not God, brought them into conflict with theologians, while their emphasis on the submission to God and the de-emphasis on sharia brought them often into conflict with legalists. But they were popular with the people. In the past they helped spread Islam to the Far East, undertook, among others, public relief, public security and defence, and governed cities, while recently they have become politicized and helped organize rebellion, including in Chechnya. Conservatives and radicals have copied Sufism in providing much-needed services, such as schools, health clinics and social welfare agencies.

Early violent and puritanical sects influenced later developments; ranging from 18th century Wahhabism to 21st century ultra-conservatism and radicalism. Wahhabis saw their world in black and white. Wanting to purify Islam, they argued that the end justified the means, including violence, guerrilla warfare and the destruction of venerated places, including Muhammad's tomb. Their destruction created animosity between them and the Shiites.

As indicated above, there are significant differences within Islam, yet the majority of Muslims want simply to go on with their daily life. However, from early times to the present jihad, which is not supposed to be aggressive, has been present in some sects in violent form. Our challenge is to distinguish between the export of an ultra-conservative theology and militant extremism.

Country Living
Meindert van der Galien

The right place at the right time to meet WW2 bomber crew

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II. I have always been fascinated by the stories my father told of his experiences in Holland during the war. I'm still fascinated by them. When I was a youngster I heard about airmen parachuting out of airplanes and burning aircraft crashing down at the back of our small farm in Holland. Back then I never thought I'd meet the brave men who flew the aircraft. When I went to the Canada Aviation Museum in Ottawa in 2001, all I expected to see were the many different types of old aircraft on display in the massive building.

That summer afternoon, about a dozen people took the 45-minute guided tour of the building, which houses one of the world's best collections of vintage aircraft. The aircraft includes a full-scale replica of the Silver Dart of 1909, the first powered aircraft to take flight in Canada; the powerful Spitfire, one of the most famous British fighterplanes of the Second World War; and the Messerschmitt 163A Komet, the first jet-powered German fighter, which was developed towards the end of the war.

But there was a huge four-engine bomber – an Avro Lancaster X – in the far side of the World War II section that caught my fancy. The massive bomber, in a dark green colour, intrigued me. I kept glancing over at it.

When our tour group finally got to the bomber and we stood behind the aircraft, I was amazed at the tiny glass-enclosed place where the rear gunner would sit among machine guns and ammunition. It was hard to imagine that someone could fit in that place and sit there for eight hours on bombing runs.

Some well-dressed elderly gentlemen and their wives and families suddenly joined our group as the tour guide told us the details of the aircraft.

The tour guide explained that the rear gunner sat in a very precarious cramped quarters, for hours. As the guide was explaining this, one of the elderly gentlemen said something that sounded like he knew what she was talking about.

"She's damn right!" he said. "I should know. I was there!"

The elderly gentlemen gathered around us were the last living bomber crew, there for a portrait by artist Elaine Goble.

Memory takes flight

It turned out there were four very special men and their wives among us. A daughter of one of the men had brought them together. She wanted a painting of her dad and his

The crew: Eric Hodgson, Hazen (Mike) Manning, Bill Pettit and Ralph Stutt.

war chums together before it was too late. The Canada Aviation Museum, upon request, jumped at the chance to get a picture of the last remaining bomber crew still intact and still alive.

The tour group moved on and I stayed and chatted with the airmen and asked them to pose for a photo. I had a camera, pen and notebook and couldn't believe I was in the right place at the right time. The photo is a treasure.

The men flew a British Wellington bomber, which is smaller but similar to the Lancaster. William Pettit of Ottawa was the rear gunner, Eric Hodgson of Winnipeg was the front gunner, Mike Manning of Oshawa was the radio (wireless) operator and Ralph Stutt of Ottawa was the pilot. The navigator, Roland Dube of Grandmere Quebec, was killed in 1950 in an RCAF air crash in Alaska.

For nearly a year (from November 1942 to August 1943) they flew together in night raids over German cities and later from North Africa to Sicily. In spite of nightly anti-aircraft fire and attacks from German fighter planes that sometimes left their Wellington bomber so full of holes that a ground crew had to replace the wings before it could fly again, no crew member was ever injured. After August of '43, they trained other aircrews.

When I met the men, Stutt was 89, Petitt was 83, Manning was 85 and Hodgson was 90. A portrait was made from a photo taken that day and donated to the new War Museum in Ottawa.

The men have been lifelong friends.

Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew-area farmer and newspaper columnist. He was born in Holland in 1949.

Intangible Things
Heidi VanderSlikke

Tell your stories, even the hard ones

My father, Alfons, suffered as a boy at the hands of an abusive father and an indifferent mother. His prospects for the future were limited by living in a small, strictly Catholic town near Germany's Black Forest. He could follow in his father's footsteps as a blacksmith, or make his family proud and join the priesthood. He chose the blacksmith trade and earned his master's papers by age seventeen. As soon as he legally could, he enlisted into the army, believing a military career would set him free from his brutal upbringing.

Alfons and Hildegard on their wedding day, January 25, 1947.

When World War II broke out, his skills as a blacksmith gained him sergeant's stripes in the cavalry. In Russia he experienced hunger, frostbite and unprecedented anxiety. He killed a young man in hand-to-hand combat and left his best friend behind to either bleed to death or shoot himself.

One night, lying on his belly in a muddy trench, he listened to the moans of injured comrades and awaited the next volley of shellfire. He promised himself to one day escape from Germany, no matter how the war ended. Never in his wildest dreams had he imagined this unspeakable misery.

Hildegard (my mother) grew up in the bustling city of Hanover, in northern Germany, baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran church. Her father died of polio when she was nine months old. Her mother worked as a seamstress for a wealthy clientele to provide for the two of them.

She did well in school, loved reading and excelled in arithmetic. When she finished grade eight, she attended business classes three mornings a week and worked afternoons and Saturdays as an apprentice meat-cutter in a large butcher shop and delicatessen.

Meanwhile, her mother married a widower with two sons of his own and she became the middle child in a blended family. When the war began, food was scarce, but Hilde continued working at the store and the owners often gave her scraps of meat or soup bones.

One day she returned home to discover the entire block flattened. In the rubble of the apartment building she found their stone coffee pot and the small mirror that had hung in their kitchen. All their other possessions were destroyed. Before the war ended they were bombed out two more times. Somehow the coffee pot and the mirror survived.

Radios were forbidden, but the neighbours stowed one away. At night they congregated to listen to broadcasts from the BBC. They took turns watching for the headlights of Gestapo trucks patrolling the blacked-out streets. If they detected the radio, the punishment would be severe.

Alfons and Hildegard met in an underground shelter in Hanover during an air raid. He sat beside her on a rough wooden bench. Wanting to make conversation with the pretty young woman he asked, "How long does this usually last?"

With a withering look she answered, "Until it's over."

In years to come he would tell the tale, adding, "If there hadn't been bombs dropping outside, I probably would have left right then and there."

But when he boarded an army train the next day, she promised to keep in touch. A year later, he proposed to her. They married when the war ended and his discharge was complete.

In the early 1950s, my father fulfilled his vow to leave Germany. He came to Canada, worked for a year in a northern Ontario mine and saved up to send for my mother and brother to join him. After I was born the family moved to southern Ontario.

Growing up, I heard their stories time and again. In many ways the war defined their lives. Telling the stories helped them to heal, and to cope with the grief and guilt shared by the German people as a whole. Unaware of the atrocities until after the fact, most Germans still felt responsibility for what happened in their country.

As I child, I shared that guilt every Remembrance Day. Taunted by some of my classmates, I pretended to ignore the name-calling. Deep inside I lamented my heritage. But I understood then, as I do now, the importance of telling the stories of war and remembering the sacrifices made. My father often quoted Churchill: "Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

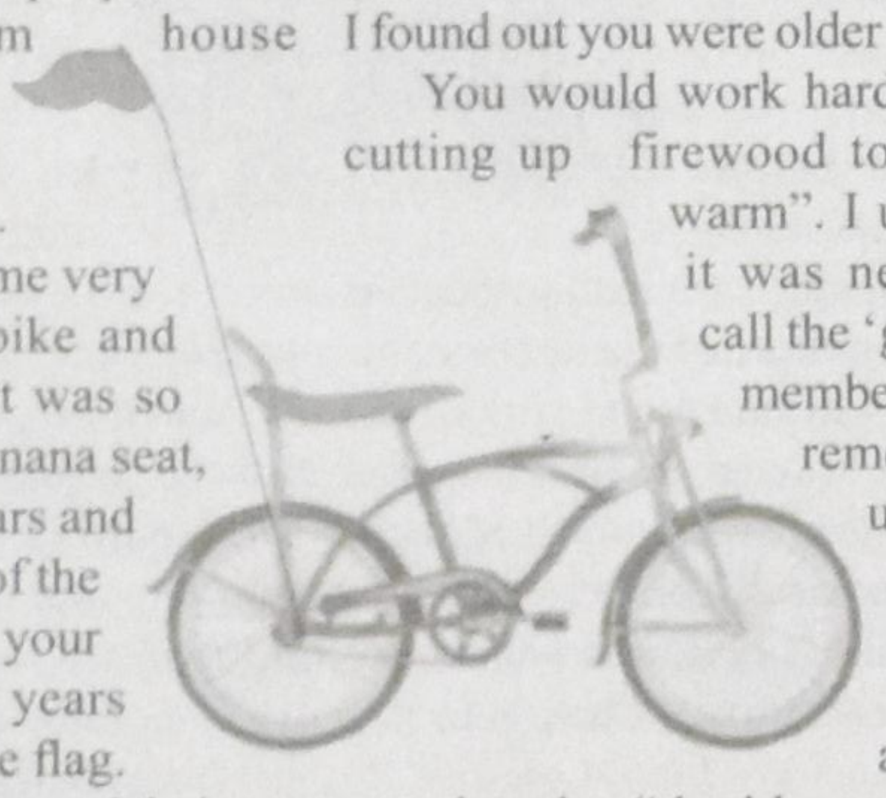
Believers also have a story to tell – of undeniable guilt and unmerited pardon, of promise and deliverance, and of a war that's already been won by a sacrifice like no other, even as the battle rages on. For us, every day is Remembrance Day.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ontario.

Columns

Remembering my friend

I first met you when I was six. It was the same day my family and I moved into our new house on your street. You biked over to our new house. You spent your sleeping hours at your house and your waking hours elsewhere. Your place was 11 houses away but because these were country properties it was a great feat to ride from house to house. I walked that once when I was a kid and it seemed to take a long time.



You made an impression on me very quickly. I remember your bike and as a six year old I thought it was so cool. I remember the long banana seat, the motorcycle type handlebars and the bright orange flag on top of the pole that was duct-taped to your seat. I wouldn't realize till years later why you had that orange flag.

My parents immediately opened their doors and their hearts for you. And you walked right in, sat down and took up your space. You stayed longer than anyone would have imagined.

You were as strong as anyone I knew. I remember when you would peel back the sleeves of your buttoned up dress shirt to flex your muscles for my brother and I. You had some serious biceps. You loved teaching us things. You seemed so worldly, knowledgeable and so believable. As a six-year old, I hung on to every word you spoke. But at that time, I couldn't understand why you didn't have a job, car or could tie your own shoes. That seemed strange especially when I found out you were older than my own dad.

You would work hard in the backyard cutting up firewood to "keep the grils warm". I used to think that it was neat the way you call the 'girls', 'grils'. I remember your temper too. remember when you used swear words, I really listened then. You used to tell my brother and I about those people who "double-crossed" you. And when you spoke of them, you would take a small note pad and pencil out of your shirt pocket and write their name down and violently cross it out. But I knew that you couldn't read or write.

When I got older, you weren't an event anymore, you were a staple. We knew you would come over in the morning and wave good bye later in the day. When I was too shallow and selfish to understand the unfair nature of my behaviour, I would ask you to hide behind the shed when the school bus came because I was embarrassed if my friends saw you. I wonder if you ever realized why.

You wanted to marry each of my three sisters. You started with the oldest and when she brought home a boyfriend, that wasn't a problem because you just went on to sister number two. And when she brought a boyfriend home, my youngest sister was next. But when she brought a boyfriend home you were upset until my Mom explained to you that you were more important than a boyfriend, that you were a brother. You liked that. My mom could do no wrong in your eyes. Anytime there was a problem, my Mom always had the last word, and you always listened. My Mom liked that too, I think it made her feel safe. Maybe that's why she would sometimes give you cigarettes.

I know that you didn't like going home. My dad would tell me years later that your dad loved the bottle more than anything else. And that he gave you bruises and a good reason to find another spot to spend the day. I only met your dad once and I was scared of him. I can see why you were too.

You would quote what you remembered you read in the bible. You sometimes called yourself "the reverend" and you told us that you taught Sunday school but I knew that wasn't the truth but wasn't prepared to question you about it. You remembered that the bible told people to be nice to their sisters, to get angry with people who double crossed you and that if we were going to play with fire, we'd get bit. I think we had different bibles.

You died in a barber shop waiting for your haircut. In many ways it was because of you that I came to my life's calling of working with people with special needs. My education was early and often. The material things you left were the clothes on your back and your worn out bicycle but for me, you left me with much, much more.

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the founder of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda. He lives near St. Catharines, Ont.

From Toddlers to Teens

by Denise Dykstra

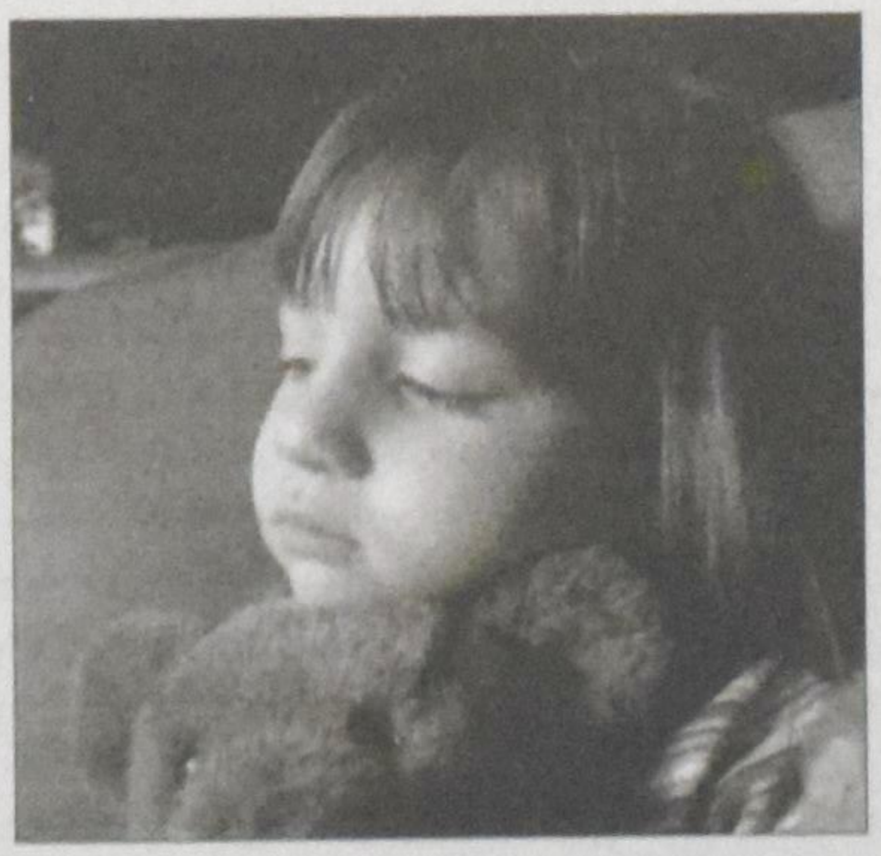
The rewards of foster parenting

One of the downfalls of having five kids is that they're a formidable force when they gang up on you. They outnumber you by a lot so they're pretty powerful when they decide to work together. If you're not on your toes, they'll wear you down and get want they want before you even know what hit you.

Ray and I have faced this force in the past and come out on the losing end. This time that's not going to happen. Our kids – ages 16, 14, 12, seven and four – have recently united to convince us to become a foster family again. They're motivated by compassion so their intentions are honorable, but the reality is that their wish just isn't going to come true.

I loved being a foster parent, don't get me wrong. It wasn't an easy job but it was amazingly rewarding. When I snuggled the tiny little babies who landed in our home, I felt like my arms were the arms of our great God. I felt a calling. I felt I was doing something I was created to do. And through that, I discovered a strength in myself that I didn't previously know existed.

The difference between then and now has everything to do with our family. Six or seven years ago our home life was much simpler. We didn't have as many kids and our kids were younger and not as involved in extra-curricular activities. We had more time and, as a result, more energy. We could give to our foster children all that they required – and deserved.



Today, our house is too small and our evenings too busy. And, to be honest, I can't handle anything more. I know my limitations; I'm aware of my stressors. I'm absolutely certain I wouldn't be nearly as effective a parent if I took on another challenge.

Becoming a foster family again is not an option for us right now. But don't think I don't continually question that decision. I pray about it – a lot. I know how desperate the need is for foster homes in Alberta. I know how many kids there are in this province – in all the provinces– that require a safe, healthy, and stable environment to live in.

Wanted: a place to call home

The shortage of foster homes in Alberta is so great that last year Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services introduced an initiative called *A Child's Hope*. The goal of this program is to empower people to transform the lives of children and youth in need through fostering, adoption, or mentoring. Knowing how desperate our government is makes it all the more difficult for me not to step up and help out. And all the more determined to do what little I can do – try to inspire others.

You don't have to own your own home or earn a high income to become a foster parent. You don't have to be married; you don't need to have children. All you need is an extra room and the willingness to take the necessary training to enhance your parenting skills.

I know, I know, it's not that simple. But how does the saying go? God never said life would be easy; he just promised he would be with us and it would all be worth it in the end. Besides, in my experience the benefits of fostering far outweigh the difficulties.

Making a positive impact on a child's life is extremely rewarding. In fact, I'd argue there's nothing more rewarding than knowing your life is making another person's life better. And I'm not just talking about providing food and shelter. I'm talking about loving a child while participating in the reunification of a family or the making of a new family (if the bio-family can't make it work and the child ends up being adopted). I'm talking about rebuilding trust in a child and teaching them by example what a healthy family is all about.

Speaking of teaching – fostering also teaches wonderful things to your own children. It teaches compassion and understanding, empathy and thoughtfulness. It models to your kids that it's not enough to just talk the talk when it comes to living a Christian life. A Christian needs to be the hands and feet of Jesus here on earth.

Fostering is hard, very hard. How many times did I hear people say, "I couldn't give the child up!" If you choose to foster you have to be willing to take on this emotional pain. You have to be willing to suffer because you know that the love and security you provide for a child, even for a short time, makes it all worthwhile.

Fostering will force you to your knees over and over again. But isn't that where you want to be?

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) is a writer from Edmonton, Alberta. She and her husband have five children, two of whom were adopted through foster care. She sees this as another benefit of being a foster parent!

Taking a trip to New York City

Heidi Kerssies.

I recently flew to New York City. It was quite possibly the worst trip I have ever taken. I arrived at the airport well on time, only to find that my direct flight had been cancelled. There were high winds in New York. No flights were going out. They rebooked me on a flight for the next morning – 7 a.m. through Detroit.

The next morning we made it to Detroit and I easily caught my flight to NYC. It was as we were settling in that things began falling apart. Someone from the previous flight had gotten sick and used the air sickness bag which had now split. The steward had to call for help. Then the pilot announced that the hot water in the bathrooms was scalding and they were calling someone to fix it. He did not want anyone to burn themselves and then lodge a complaint. The pilot at this point was making jokes, talking about a voyage of a thousand miles.

About an hour later we pushed back from the gate and headed to the run way. Suddenly we pulled off. The pilot announced that there was lightening in New York and we were not given permission to take off. We had to wait for clearance. Later the steward announced that she had no information about connecting flights and to please refrain from asking. There were no jokes at this point. After a long wait we took off.

The flight was smooth and we landed in NYC. As we pulled up to the gate the pilot announced that we were to remain seated with our seatbelts fastened. No explanation was given. Close to an hour later, five police vehicles pulled up beside the plane. Officers entered our plane. They made their way down the aisle and escorted one of the passengers off. One of the officers said, "Welcome to New York." It had been a very long trip.

I went to New York City to visit a friend that I had met while living in Honduras. She came to NYC a few years ago. While still feeling sorry for myself and my horrible trip to New York she told me about her trip to NYC. She came as many come from Central America, riding the freight trains through Mexico and crossing the Rio Grande on an inner tube. She told me how they ran along side the trains and had to grab on as it was moving. For one day and night she rode the train, mostly staying in the space between two cars. She was too afraid to ride on top. One fellow she met along the journey rode on the top of the train and was knocked off, perhaps by a tree branch. They never heard or saw from him again. She talked about walking long distances, without food or water. She said that in some communities people gave them tortillas and beans, that they showed mercy.

When she made it to the boarder of the US and Mexico she had to find someone to take her across the river. She had paid someone $1000 to bring her across Mexico. She would pay someone else $1500 to help her cross the boarder. They had to cross the Rio Grande on inner tubes. They crossed at three p.m. in the afternoon.

On the other side they had to walk through the desert in Texas. She said that at one point the Immigration Guards spotted them and began chasing them. She and two others fell into some sort of hole and were undetected. The other 18 people that were in their group were all caught and returned to their home countries.

Two weeks after leaving Honduras she arrived in New York and moved in with a couple of her nephews who were already living there. They also had made a similar journey to New York. She told me that for months after every time she tried to sleep she heard the sounds of the freight train.

Her story causes me to pause. I am able to board a plane and fly almost any where I wish. I can enter almost any country, without question. My friend, on the other hand, can only enter the US by sneaking across the boarder. She is not permitted to board a plane and if she somehow manages to get on one she would probably be met by police officers ready to escort her away.

I know the topic of illegal immigration is controversial. When I lived in Honduras I met many people who wanted to go North. I constantly advised against it. The trip is very dangerous, I said, you have to be careful about getting caught. Life in the US is expensive and not always easy. But what do I know? I live a life with choices.

So many choices, in fact, that I would probably never have to choose to ride a freight train seeking a better life. Often when I try to sleep I think about people riding the freight trains across Mexico. I pray that they may be shown mercy.

Heidi Kerssies is principal and teacher of Silvercrest Christian School in Wasaga Beach, Ontario.

Not your father's Democrats

THE PUBLIC SQUARE
Harry Antonides

A review of *The Shadow Party: How George Soros, Hillary Clinton, and sixties Radicals Seized Control of the Democratic Party* (Horowitz and Poe, 2006)

This is a riveting story of behind-the-scenes manipulations in American politics. It provides a surprising and well-documented look at the rise of the Shadow Party and its main instigators, determined to remake America into a "radical Utopia."

The leaders of this revolutionary movement are convinced that action is needed at two levels: pressures from below and from above. The latter takes place by political action in Congress and all other branches of government. Getting the "right" voters out and expanding the role of government are crucial to the success of their plans.

The pressure from below is to fill the streets with rioters and protestors to create the impression that the demanded changes are popular and inevitable. (The books and articles of Frances Piven and Richard Cloward, e.g. *Poor Peoples' Movements*, have taught many the fine art of persuasion by intimidation and thuggery.)

Puppet masters

Saul Alinsky (1909 –1972) was another expert in teaching his followers how to galvanize the poor into action and to mobilize them for the revolution in America. He believed that radical change requires the infiltration of institutions with roots in the community, such as churches, unions, and local political machines.

But he also knew that even if all the poor people would come together, it would not be enough to get the radical changes he wanted. To win support among the white majority, he needed middle class activists such as Hillary Clinton, whom he saw as "potential emissaries to the America heartland" and as "middle-class guerrillas"(56 – 57).

Hillary Clinton was much impressed by Alinsky, devoting her 1969 senior thesis at Wellesley College to him, praising his ideas and including excerpts from his not-yet-published *Rules for Radicals*. In the foreword of this book, Alinsky pays tribute to Lucifer as the first radical who won his own kingdom. Clinton and Alinsky kept in touch until his death in 1972.

Though the Shadow Party indeed lives in the shadow, its front organizations are well known. They include the so-called Seven Sisters: MoveOn.org, Center for American Progress, America Votes, America Coming Together (ACT), The Media Fund, Joint Victory Campaign 2004, and The Thunder Road Group LLC. There are many more, including ACORN.

Who is George Soros?

Horowitz and Poe write that the Shadow Party was founded on July 17, 2003, when "a team of political strategists, wealthy donors, left wing labor leaders and other democratic activists" met at George Soros's estate on Long Island, pledging a total of $23 million to rejuvenate ACT.

George Soros is a Hungarian-born Jew who survived the Nazi occupation, studied and worked in England, and moved to the U.S. in 1956, where he thrived as an astute investor and financial manager. *Forbes* estimates Soros to be the 29th richest person in the world with a net worth of US$ 7.2 billion; since 1979 he has given away $5 billion in America and many other countries.

In September 1992 Soros became known as "the man who broke the Bank of England" when he forced the Bank to devalue the pound sterling. The UK Treasury estimated the cost of "Black Wednesday" to be 3.4 billion pounds sterling. Horowitz and Poe write that this devaluation launched a "tsunami of financial turmoil from Tokyo to Rome." In his own defense, Soros says "[I]f I had tried to take social consequences into account, it would have thrown off my risk-reward calculation, and my profit would have been reduced" (*Crisis of Global Capitalism).*

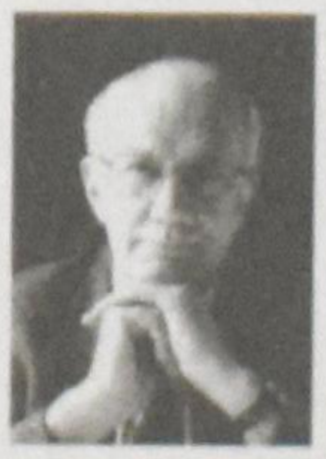
The New Lenin

According to Horowitz and Poe, George Soros is one of the most powerful men on earth, "the architect and guiding genius of the Shadow Party, its 'Lenin.'" Like Lenin, Soros excels in manipulating "economic and political forces at the highest levels." But he also resembles Lenin in diligently cultivating the insurgent forces from "below."

On the surface Soros is a well-known public figure often in the news. Yet he remains elusive, and his goals are obscured "by a smoke-screen of denial and calculated misdirection." In conclusion, Horowitz and Poe issue this warning against the danger Soros represents.

"He has assembled an army of radical allies who have long been at war with the American system . . . . As only such an individual could, Soros has woven his conspiracy out of institutional elements plucked from every level of the existing social hierarchy. . . . It is the party of rebels but also the party of rulers – a corporate unity of capital and labor. And it has been insinuated into the heart of the American system" (243).

This book opens a Pandora's box of falsehood and treachery. It is not pleasant reading. But it is essential reading for all who want to know the truth about this dangerous attempt to remake not only America but the entire world. Such revolutionary attempts have never worked but always resulted in unspeakable evil. This revolution will be no exception. (*The Shadow Party* was published in 2006, and the instalment of Barack Obama in the White House has put the revolution described here in overdrive.) Let the readers beware.



Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Features

Tithing to the wrong god: Investing in social responsibility

Emily Wierenga

When it comes to the economic recession, three things apply, says Lorne Jackson, founder of Ottawa's Advisors with Purpose: Debt, debt and more debt.

"Government, corporate and personal – everywhere you turn, everyone's spent more than they've made."

Poor investments have resulted in tight economic times. And until North America learns to invest wisely, Jackson adds, the problems will only increase. "In the Bible, God always talked about debt as a curse. I think we are experiencing the results of God's curse on our land today, because we've taken him out of everything."

Stewardship makes cents

The Bible makes 2,350 references to possessions and finances. "God knew that, if taken in the wrong context, money could appear to provide for us everything he is supposed to," says Jackson. "But it fails to provide these things in the end."

Stewardship, Jackson explains, is recognizing that God owns it all. "It isn't about how much of my money do I have to give to God, but instead, how much of God's money does he want me to use for myself?"

Karen Bjerland of Waterloo's FaithLife Financial says it's about God's people becoming conservers versus consumers. "We are managers of what God has given us," she says, "and we have to be responsible."

The difficulty, adds Gary Hawton, founder of Meritas Mutual Funds, lies in applying stewardship to a world gone mad – that is, a world in which the average global wage is three dollars per day. "Globalization has left people with so little, that in their lifetime, they'll earn less than my investments lost during last fall's market corrections."

So what do we do with that? he asks. Do we give everything away? How do we put our faith where our money is?

Socially responsible investments

The answer, Hawton concludes, lies in using our finances to give a voice back to the voiceless. In other words, to invest in companies striving to make a difference, both environmentally and socially.

Socially Responsible Investments (SRIs) beg the question: Am I honouring God's creation with my finances?

That is, "Are my investments creating widows and orphans, or helping them?" says Hawton. "Are they taking advantage of disadvantaged children, or lending them a hand?"

The only way to know the answer is by going to someone whose job it is to know – someone like Michael Jantzi of Toronto's Jantzi Research.

"We track the environmental and social performance of companies which investment managers are looking to invest in," explains Jantzi, 45, who founded Jantzi Research 20 years ago.

"How do you know which values are more environmentally and socially responsible? That's where we fit into the equation. That's the core. We're on the research level."

Having grown up in a Mennonite household, Jantzi says he was raised to be concerned about social justice. "These types of issues which we track every day were a part of the fabric of my every-day life."

Finding himself attracted to the business end of things, Jantzi says the light bulb went on in 1989 when he learned about SRIs. "As soon as I heard about them, I knew. If we're going to change corporate behaviour, do it through the markets."

Money talks, says Jantzi, and companies listen. "If we can impact how investment money flows to companies, then we can impact their actions and bring corporate responsibility to the agenda."

Grading responsibility

No one is perfect. Similarly, each company has its flaws. Jantzi Research recognizes this, and therefore supports those looking to minimize their adverse impact.

"It's about making sure the water we drink and the air we breathe are healthy," he says. "We're looking for companies that understand that, as well as those that operate according to the Golden Rule."

In short, he summarizes, a responsible company is one that pays attention to a broad range of stakeholders (environmental, human rights, employees and communities), not just the shareholder. "If corporate management pays attention to these broader stakeholder interests," he adds, "that's good for the shareholder, and good for the bottom line."

Money-makers

As a result of abiding by socially responsible guidelines, companies experience a more productive workforce, less turnover, less absenteeism and more business. "It's about common-sense business," says Jantzi. "The opportunity to align faith values and economics is a powerful thing in its own right. The fact that you can make money at the same time is a no-brainer."

Wendell Schlumberger, senior vice president of Waterloo's FI Capital, agrees. "Both FaithLife Financial and FI Capital, through its two SRI Funds, believe that environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) issues can affect the performance of investment portfolios," he says, "and that companies that incorporate ESG considerations into their business model and operations represent more sound long-term investments."

God honours SRIs, Schlumberger adds, because they represent a method of channeling his good will in a positive direction.

Expensive hypocrisy

Unfortunately, while the entire SRI-movement was catalyzed by the church community back in 1970 with the Task Force on Churches' Corporate Responsibility (now KAIROS), Jantzi has observed a saddening amount of hypocrisy amongst church-goers when it comes to finances.

"They tend to think, I'm going to invest as much money as I can and then donate through philanthropy," he says. Often that means wreaking as much havoc as possible through investments, and then giving back to charity. "They don't think that through their investments they might be supporting companies which are causing the problems in the first place."

Jantzi's job is to help people connect the dots – to recognize how their investments will ultimately impact the world. "But then when you point out these inconsistencies, and people choose to ignore it – that's what I find frustrating."

Hawton agrees. "A lot of God's money is invested in ungodly companies," he says. "Christians need to stand up to their financial planners and say, 'It's not just about how much money I make, but how it's made.'"

Too often, he says, believers get caught up in numbers, when in fact we're called to a higher standard than anyone else: to be leaders in the area of finance, by bringing a compassionate perspective to it.

True tithing

This, adds Hawton, is where the church needs to take a stand. "Growing up, I remember many messages where stewardship was about 10 per cent of my income, but rarely did it become about my retirement money. Rarely did it talk about the other 90 per cent."

We've separated our beliefs from our finances, he laments, and this is something which needs to be remedied. With the number of child labourers in the world being six times Canada's population, something is wrong, says Hawton. "We're completely out of step with our Messiah in terms of his views on money and what it can do."

According to Jackson, the average Canadian gives 2.3 per cent of his income to charity, and 9.8 per cent to interest on consumer debt. "So we Canadians are tithing – but to the wrong god. The Bible says we can serve God or money; looks like we're serving money."

The cost of caring

John Horwood, an Advisor with Purpose employed by the Toronto branch of Richardson Partners Financial Limited, says it's about knowing what money is, and what it isn't. "We have a responsibility to provide for our families, but if we hug money and don't understand its true purpose, it becomes an idol."

As Christians, explains Hawton, we need to search the Scriptures and try to determine, 'Are there products on the shelves which my beliefs say I shouldn't buy?' If so, figure out who makes that product and avoid that company.

"We can bring some balance back to the world of investment – a world that gets fixated on numbers only. We need to help the corporate world ask the harder, more important questions like, 'What was the true cost of this product?'"

The economic recession is an opportunity for Christians to express economic faith, he says; to re-evaluate needs and wants, and to become salt and light in the financial world.

"I would hope that every person sitting inside a church would say, 'No; just because it's permissible doesn't mean it's beneficial. I need to grab hold of that, and care.'"

Emily Wierenga is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives with her husband and son in Neerlandia, AB. For more information, please visit www.emilywierenga.com

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Good habits save lives … Fall into the battery time change ritual!

The fire service looks for every available opportunity to instil the basics of fire safety. Year in and year out, they bundle the smoke alarm battery replacement message with the time change every Spring and Fall.

Research has shown as many as one-half of all households don't maintain the ritual of installing new batteries. It's a deadly oversight. In more than 60 per cent of fatal fires in Canada, investigators find smoke alarms with the batteries removed, smoke alarms with dead batteries, or no smoke alarms at all.

Smoke alarms need to be replaced every 10 years whether they are battery-only or hardwired. According to Carol Heller, a home safety expert with Kidde Canada, even if your home's smoke alarms are wired into your electrical system, most have battery back-up in case of a power outage so check the batteries in those too.

Replacing smoke alarm batteries once per year is a simple but tried-and-true practise that doubles your chances of escaping and surviving a fire. With the home heating season upon us and the heightened attention on the dangers of carbon monoxide, Fall is also a great time to install new batteries in CO alarms.

"Entire families have been killed by carbon monoxide in this country so it is time Canadians took CO protection seriously," Carol Heller says. "This gas is colourless, odourless and tasteless to humans. The only way to detect it is with a CSA-approved carbon monoxide alarm. Homeowners need reminding that CO alarms also require replacement, every five to seven years."

Good habits save lives! For more information on home fire safety and carbon monoxide safety visit www.SafeAtHome.ca.

Miraculous Biogas

Renewable Energy is attracting considerable interest throughout Canada. Renewable Energy has already made significant contributions to sustainable development in other jurisdictions such as the European Union. Three forms of renewable energy get a lot of attention here in Canada specifically Solar, Wind and Small Hydro. There are however other forms of renewable energy which don't get nearly as much attention such as Biomass, Solar Thermal, Geothermal and Biogas.

Generation of renewable energy via Anaerobic Digestion/Biogas is nothing short of miraculous according to Martin Lensink, Joint Venture Partner in PlanET Biogas Solutions and member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines. Through relatives in the Netherlands, Martin became very interested in Biogas about 7 or 8 years ago. He has seen how the technology was being deployed in the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Austria and Switzerland and was smitten by the process.

After seven years, Martin remains totally fascinated by the process of converting organic matter into combustible biogas. Although the micro biology is well understood and well documented the fact that anaerobic bioconversion occurs over four distinct steps and that micro organisms can generate methane is clear and convincing evidence of the order God has created.

Anaerobic means "in the absence of oxygen". Organic matter is fed into a large sealed airless container. The organic matter can be produced "on farm" (such as manure or energy crops) or come from a wide variety of off-farm sources. In this oxygen free environment, bacteria produce biogas. Biogas is about 50 - 65% methane and the rest is CO2. The contents of the digester are heated to accelerate the process. Biogas can be used to generate heat or electricity or both. The essential nutrients for the soil (N, P&K) are preserved. There are over 5,000 anaerobic digesters operating throughout Europe with about 20 – 30 operating in Canada and about 200 in the USA. Via anaerobic digestion pathogens, weed seeds and odors are eliminated from manure. The fertilizing qualities of manure are improved and the profitability of the farm is improved. Martin is encouraged by the interest in Biogas in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia. Martin is convinced that anaerobic bioconversion is a key strategy towards a sustainable future.

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Classifieds

Anniversaries

1960 October 15 2010

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Menno (Mel) and Jenny Boelens-Wynia

celebrated our **50th Wedding Anniversary**
with our children and grandchildren
Thanksgiving weekend at
Providence Point, Lanark, Ontario.

Kelly-Ann & Bernie Tiemstra, Lacombe, Alta.
Derek & Sheryl Boelens, Cambridge, Ont.
Carmen & Dale Scott, Lloydminster Alta.
and nine grandchildren

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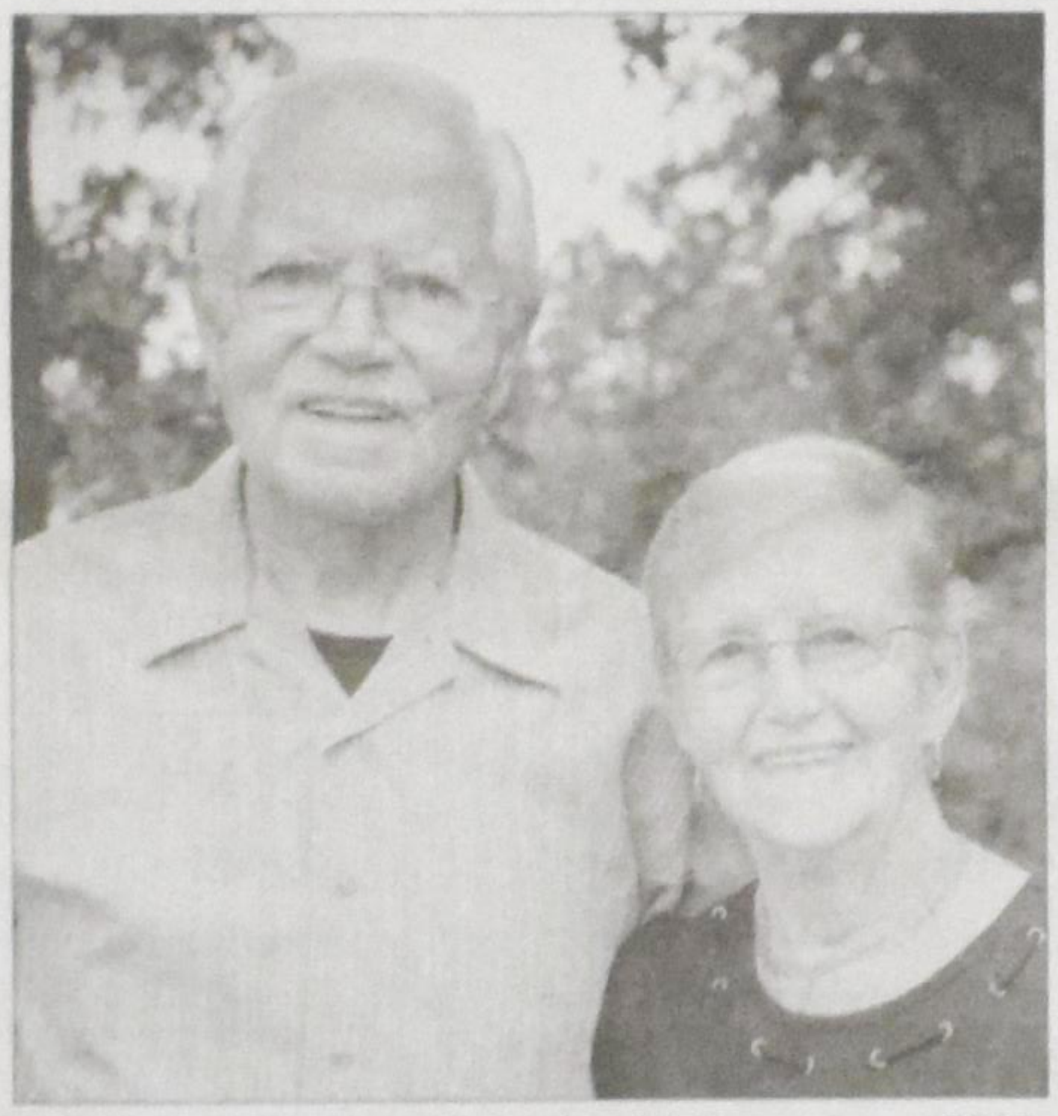

1950 November 14 2010

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.
Psalm 103:2

We can't thank God enough for our inspiring parents

Lammert and Alice Slofstra (nee Oving)

as they celebrate their **60th Anniversary**
of marriage and ordained ministry

With much love:
Peter and Marja Slofstra, *Courtice, ON*
Bert and Diane Slofstra, *Abbotsford, B.C.*
Grace and Bill Hoogland, *Abbotsford, B.C.*
John and Fran Slofstra, *Victoria, B.C.*
Jane and Jack Bosman, *Kitchener, Ontario*
Along with their 17 grandchildren, their spouses,
and 35 great-grandchildren

Open house at "The Oasis" in Elim Village, Surrey, B.C.
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Classifieds: Send obituaries, birthdays, anniversary announcements to: rose@christiancourier.ca
All other ads to: admin@christiancourier.ca

In Memoriam

Helen Janssen (nee Timmerman)

April 29, 1926 - September 14, 2002

and

Hank Jannssen

June 28, 1921 - November 16, 2009

Together Again
Dearly loved Mom and Dad,
Oma and Opa, Great-grandparents
of:

Harry, Sharon
David, Veronique – Anouk, Oksana
Jeff, Jen – Cole, Noah, Julia
Rick, Loralee
Stephen, Jenn – Sophia
Scott
Ina
Derek
Hennie, Dennis
Shawn
John, Cheryl
Tammy, Mark – Madison, Mackenzie
Michael
William, Cathy
Daniel, Kerri
Kevin, Wendy
Hannah Jasmine, Andres, Owen
Gregory, Jenny
Joanna

There is a link death cannot sever;
Love and remembrance last forever.

Obituary

Oenkerk
the Netherlands
Dec. 11, 1927

Brampton
Ontario
Oct.11, 2010

The Lord called home

Wijke Rekker-Barens

wife of the late Henk Barens (Dec. 1967).

Dear sister and aunt of
Anna Riemer (Rekker) *of Brampton*
Flo (Naren Leava) *of Aurora*
Gertie (Fred Ferwerda) *of Guelph*
Garry (Mariella Montgomery) *of Guelph*
Joan (Steve Newmaster) *of Eden Mills*

Obituary

A resident of Iroquois for the past 6 years,

Gerda Mudde (nee Bosman)

passed away at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital on Saturday, October 2, 2010. She was 66.
Gerda was born in Ellecom, The Netherlands on January 27, 1944
to her parents Henderik and Joke Bosman (nee Vink).

Gerda is survived by her husband Bram, her children Ian (Tammy) of RR 1 Iroquois, Mark (Tennille) of Toronto and Nicole (Brian) Dijkema of Ottawa, her mother Joke Bosman-Vink of Holland, her siblings Gonda (Harry) Blok of Holland, Irma (George) Jackson of Iroquois, Hans Bosman of Brockville, Magda Bosman of Holland, Wilma Bosman (Doug Taylor) of Wakefield, Elly Bosman of Iroquois, Gerard Bosman of Holland and Fritz (Anita) Bosman of Holland. She was the much loved Oma of Olivia, Terrence, Elias, Micah, Sidney and Reid. She was predeceased by her father Henderik Bosman. She was the dear aunt of Jolanda (Ed) DeJong of Chesterville.

Friends called at the Marsden and McLaughlin Funeral Home, Williamsburg, on Monday. Funeral service was held at the Community Christian Reformed Church, Dixons Corners on Tuesday, October 5th at 11 a.m., with Rev. Clarence Witten officiating. Interment followed at Iroquois Point Cemetery. Pallbearers were David Vandermeer, Chris Wilson, Doug Taylor, Ed DeJong, Dillon DeJong, and Brian Dijkema. Donations to the Ottawa Regional Cancer Centre or Winchester Hospital would be appreciated by the family.

Gerda Mudde was a truly exceptional woman who shaped so many lives. Gerda first came to Canada in 1967 and worked as a Nanny for several years. She then met Abraham Mudde and was married in 1971. She loved her spouse with such commitment and devotion. They were married 40 years. Gerda was an impeccable housekeeper and a thoughtful hostess. She raised Ian, Mark and Nicole on their farm on Waddell Road. Gerda's dedication to her children was extraordinary. She was so proud that all her children were married in the Christian faith. Gerda donated much of her time and talents to the Timothy Christian School setting up their library and volunteering in the classrooms to share her love of reading. She also worked in Timmy`s Place. She was an active member of the Community Christian Reformed Church. Gerda was a woman who`s faith in God never waivered.

Her favourite scripture was Philippians 4:6-7. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Gerda cherished her siblings. Gerda loved being with her brothers and sisters and if she couldn't talk to them in person she would find any way to communicate whether it be by fax, email, or telephone. She was always in contact with her mother and siblings in Holland. She loved her sisters deeply and that love extended to all members of her family. She loved sharing in family celebrations. The sisters enjoyed taking walks and talking together. Wilma, Ellie, Irma, and Jolanda loved laughing, cleaning and sipping tea together. She also liked gardening with her brother Hans. She especially appreciated Irma being beside her every step of the way through her battle with cancer. It is a true testament to the power of love.

Gerda was passionate about her grandchildren. Gerda treasured every moment and milestone of their young lives. With Olivia, her only granddaughter, Gerda loved to dress dolls and make crafts. She had great affection for Terrence and his high energy. She loved bragging about what Micah and Elias, the twins, were up to. And then when Sydney was born, Gerda was able to recognize her own smile in his. However, her passion was most evident a few hours before her death when her final wish came to fruition and she was able to hold her newest grandchild, Reid, only six days old. Gerda was an Oma who encouraged, guided and celebrated her six adoring grandchildren. Her last wish was that her grandchildren would be brought up knowing Jesus and fulfilling the promises made at their baptism. She was a wonderful Oma who took a great deal of joy and pride in her grandchildren and they took a great deal of joy in her.

When Gerda was first diagnosed with cancer 12 years ago, her true strength of character shone through. Gerda fought the cancer with the same convictions in which she led her life – with confidence, head held high and with a smile on her face.

Gerda taught us to value and love our family, to laugh everyday and to always be courageous. She will never be forgotten.

Correspondence address: Abraham Mudde, Unit 1 Box 1 - 2 Grove Street, Iroquois ON K0E1K0

Events

View more events on p. 23 or go to our website:www.christiancourier.ca and click on Reader Resources > Events

Dutch Christmas Carol Service

Emmanuel Reformed Church
170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock**

December 5th 7:00 p.m.

Rev. Henry DeBolster
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binnemat@unbc.ca.

UNBC

Applications submitted before 15 December 2010 are guaranteed consideration.

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Corny VanDasselaar - Search Committee Chair
802-6th Avenue North
Lethbridge, AB T1H 0S1
Phone: (403) 328-6380 – Fax: (403) 327-6333
Email: PrincipalSearch@ImmanuelCS.ca

Deadline for Applications is December 15, 2010

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PRINCIPAL – August 2011

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Candidates must be committed to a Reformed worldview as outlined in the constitutional Principle Guidelines for Christian education which can be found at www.immanuelchristianschool.net.

Applications will be accepted until January 15, 2011.

For further information contact:
Grace Schipper, Secretary of Principal Search Committee
53777 Talbot Line, RR 1, EDEN, Ontario N0J 1H0
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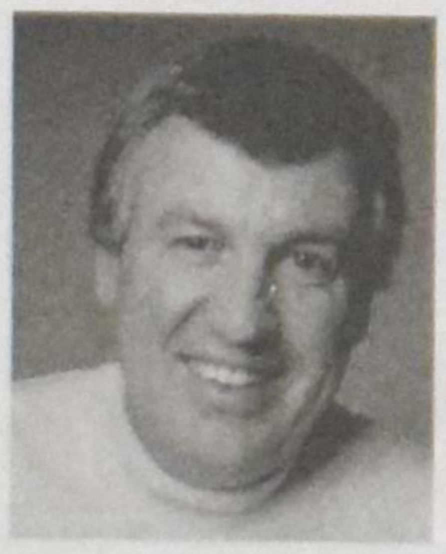

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Nov 8 12:00 p.m. Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, and the Ottawa Bach Choir (Lisette Canton, Director) present choral and organ works by Bach, Buxtehude, Poulenc, Liszt and others at Roy Thomson Hall, 60 Simcoe St., **Toronto**. Free admission. For information call 416-872-4255 or visit www.roythomson.com.

Nov. 9 1:00 p.m. Jonathan Oldengarm, organist, plays works by Gigout, Handel and Mendelssohn at St. James Cathedral, King & Church Sts., **Toronto**. Free admission. For information, call 416-364-7865.

Nov 18 Annual Church & Charity Seminar hosted by Carters Professioan Corp. from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm at Portico Community Church, 1814 Barbertown Rd, **Mississauga**, Ontario. To register, call Toll Free 1-877-942-0001 x230, Fax 519-942-0300, Email seminars@carters.ca or visit website www.carters.ca.

Nov 21 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster will be preaching.

Dec 5 Dutch Christmas Carol Service at Emmanuel Reformed Church, 170 Clarke St. N,. **Woodstock**, Ont. 7:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster. Babysitting provided. Refreshments served.

Dec 11 Christmas sing-a-long concert with the Liberation Choir 7 pm. at Redeemer University in **Ancaster**. See ad.

Feb 18-20 Marriage Encounter weekend. **St. Cathrarines, Ont**. Register at www.reformedme.org

Apr 8-10 Marriage Encounter weekend. **London, Ont**. Register at www.reformedme.org

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Friday, **November 19, 2010**, 8 pm St. Elias Ukranian Catholic Church, 10193 Heritage Road, **Brampton** $25, Students $10

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News

What time is it?

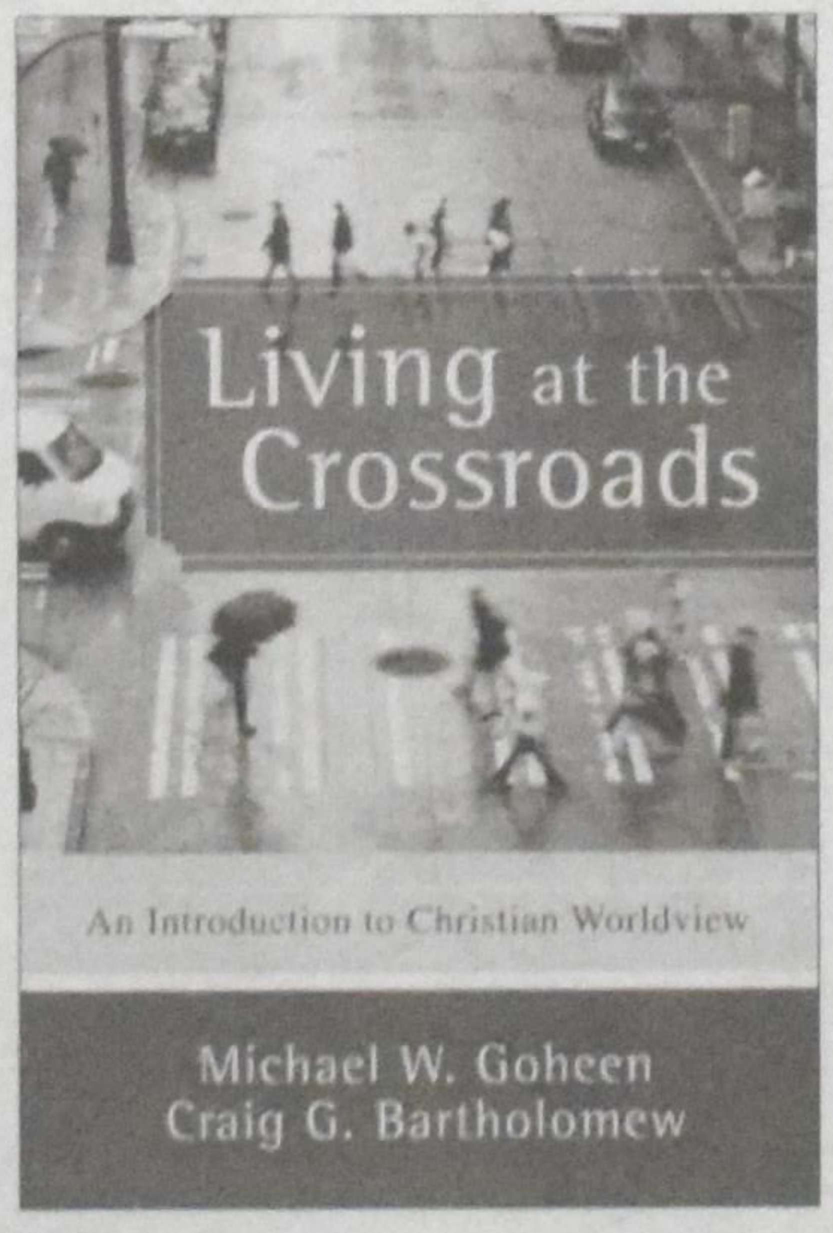
Bert Witvoet

ANCASTER, Ont. – Three professors from three traditions tried to answer the question "What time is it in our culture?" under the rubric of "Scouting the Future." They spoke at Redeemer University College under the auspices of the Paedeia Centre for Public Theology on October 15. Bob Goudzwaard, professor emeritus of economics and social policy at the Free University of Amsterdam wondered whether the question testifies to "juvenile audacity" on the part of those who framed the question. "What do we mean by our culture (when many influences have come to previously homogenous cultures) and by time?" he asked.

(L to R) Michael Goheen, Bob Goudzwaard and Craig Bartholomew.

But then he made an attempt at pointing to three indicators in our time that might predict a decline of Western culture. Many books today are published with the word "end" in their title – the end of nature, the end of history, the end of ideology and the end of faith, for example. No one seems to be talking about a beginning of something. This indicates insecurity of the kind evidenced before the onset of modernity.

A second indicator is the threats that are coming at us from many sides: the eco systems, scarcity of resources, and failing economies. Goudzwaard drew attention to the fact that a market economy like ours depends on growth, just like riding a bicycle depends on forward movement. The economic process of growth brings us to a point where demand is higher than the supply. Think of "peak oil." "I cannot predict a peaceful outcome," said Goudzwaard.



The third factor pointing to a decline of our economic system is the overpowering role money plays today. "Money has to remain a servant of the economy," says Goudzwaard. "Instead, it has too much power over us. It overwhelms the real economy."

He called upon churches to redirect people to the old norms of stewardship, love and solidarity. Churches must proclaim that there is still another way to the global economic growth illusion.

Michael Goheen, Geneva Professor of Worldview and Religious Studies at Trinity Western University in Vancouver, B.C., told his audience that his view of what drives Western society has changed. He used to point to post-modernity, which sets the mood for many younger people today, as the driving force. But he admits that even today, the structures of our economic system are thoroughly modern. He has noticed that his students in Vancouver are more post-modern than students in eastern Canada. Some claim that Vancouver is the most post-modern city in the world.

But even though post-modernity offers a fundamental challenge to the enlightenment mindset that used to dominate the university, the enlightenment triumphs in the economic structures that keep the world in its global-ized grip. We refuse to admit that economic growth and increasing prosperity for all is not sustainable. "Consumerism is the most powerful spirit today," he says. Adam Smith's vision of prosperity for all has survived the blow against economic realities.

He believes that society is organized and functionalized according to that one goal of economic growth. Educational institutions are under pressure to produce graduates who will be economically successful. State testing prevents us from doing what needs to be done: teach in a way that helps students discern their culture and come up with an alternative way of life and wisdom.

Craig Bartholomew, Principal of the Paedeia Centre, Professor of Theology and Religion at Redeemer University College and an Anglican pastor, heightened the sense of crisis with his passionate critique of our societies, which, he says, live in a dream world.

He listed five illusions that plague our countries: 1. the illusion of literacy (80 percent of U.S. citizens did not buy or read a single book in one year, whereas Canada's literacy or near-literacy he put at 42 percent). 2. The illusion of love (evident in widespread pornography). 3. The illusion of wisdom. 4. The illusion of happiness (we buy more and more corporate products that are harmful). 5. The illusion of America (as a bastion of freedom and loyalty).

"We are fast asleep on the train of global consumption," says Bartholomew, and he believes the church is part of the problem. He calls upon Christians to offer a sharp critique of their own culture, and to start living the answer that is waiting at the cross. "Education needs to be a formative process rather than an informative one. We need a worldview that comes out of a deep spirituality. Whose responsibility is that?" he asked. "The church's, the family's, or the school's?"

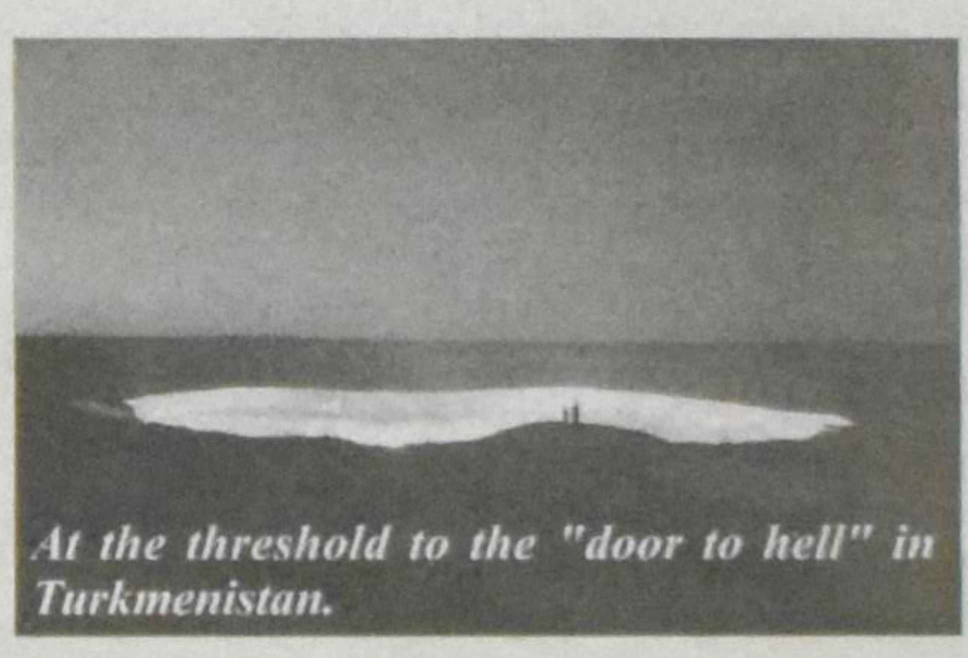
Bert Witvoet is a Contributing Editor for CC. He and his wife Alice live in St. Catharines, Ontario.

Odds and Trends

Soviet legacy

President Berdymukhamedov of Turkmenistan wants to close down "Hell's Gate," a gaping crater full of natural gas that has been spewing flames for 40 years. The crater is an astonishing 60m wide and 20m deep. It appeared in 1971 when the earth's crust caved under a drilling rig and opened up a methane-choked cave. Soviet geologists decided to burn off the gas – thinking it would take a few days – and it has been burning ever since.

It didn't take long for locals from nearby Darvaza to name the fiery hole "the door to hell," and to market it as a tourist attraction. No one knows how much natural gas is left inside the crater, or how much pollution has been created by this 40-yr-old flame.


At the threshold to the "door to hell" in Turkmenistan.

Told you so

"This may come as a shock to you, but the one who sent you this has been taken up to heaven . . . ." A new ministry based in California called Rapture Letters plans to email unbelieving friends and family after the Lord has taken true believers home. They've set up an automated email program with a dead man switch that will be triggered when it's not reset, presumably after its creators disappear. You can add names to this email list free of charge, and a generic letter explaining details of the Rapture will be sent on the first Friday after the big event, and every Friday following. Another website called You've Been Left Behind charges $40 a year to store specific letters for up to 62 people, promising to send them out post-Rapture.

As Kuyvenhoven points out in *The Day of Christ's Return*, Reformed Christians are critical of the doctrine of second chances: "The time to turn to God is now, between his one and only coming in grace and his one and only coming in glory" (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8). It's also rather hard to imagine that an email forward could change the hearts of non-believers, or that – if the tribulation did occur as left behind dispensationalists believe – the internet would still be ticking along nicely.

Pets and the Rapture

Never mind email – there's one other order of business on the post-Rapture to-do list: pet care. "When the Rapture comes, what's to become of your loving pets who are left behind?" Well, Eternal Earth-Bound Pets will save them, offering a lifetime of post-Rapture care for only $110.

This organization hires atheists, "self-confessed sinners and blasphemers" who "guarantee they will be left behind when the chosen are selected." The group calls their rescue plan the next best thing to pet salvation, promising to reach each stranded pet within 24 hours after the Rapture. They say that the fee covers travel expenses incurred during the tribulation, and current website expenses, naturally. Setting up those PayPal accounts isn't cheap, you know.

But buyer beware: "If a subscriber loses his/her faith and/or the Rapture occurs and subscriber is not Raptured (aka is 'left behind') EE-BP disclaims any liability; no refund will be tendered."

Angela Reitsma Bick